

Research Paper

The Relationship between Gratitude and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among Indian College Students: An Exploration

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ABSTRACT

Digital interaction and social comparison are increasingly influencing psychological well-being in young adulthood, which demonstrates the significance of positive psychological qualities like gratitude in understanding experiences such as Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Gratitude represents a state of appreciation and satisfaction, while Fear of Missing Out is anxiety associated with the feeling of social exclusion and the lack of experiences, particularly digital ones. Therefore, the objective of the current research is to investigate the gender disparity in gratitude and Fear of Missing Out, evaluate the connection between these two, and test how gratitude predicts FoMO among Indian college students. The sample of 126 college students (63 males and females) aged 18 to 25 years was selected using a random sampling technique. Data was gathered using GQ-6 (McCullough et al., 2002) and FoMOs (Przybylski et al., 2013). The findings showed there was a considerable gender difference in gratitude, wherein the females out-scored the males ($t = -2.06, p < .05$). It was established that gratitude was significantly and negatively correlated with FoMO ($r = -0.178, p < .05$). Regression analysis also revealed that gratitude was a significant predictor of Fear of Missing Out ($F = 4.06, p < .05$), explaining 3.2% of the variance in FoMO scores ($R^2 = .032$). The results suggest that gratitude is a beneficial psychological resource that can help buffer against the FoMO as it limits social comparison and focuses on what things one already has. The study highlights the possible utility of positive psychology-based and digital gratitude interventions, which may be focused on recognizing existing positives, in mental health interventions targeting psychological well-being improvement in college students.

Keywords: *Gratitude, Fear of Missing Out, College Students, Well-being, Young Adults*

The young adulthood (18-25) is a crucial phase of development that may have long-term implications on the emotional health and well-being of the person (Ghosh & Halder, 2020). In recent times, the psychological well-being of young adults has become a major health concern in the world, primarily because of a considerable level of advancements in digitalization, high usage of social media and an increase in pressure among college students due to comparisons (World Health Organization, 2025).

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Received: April 07, 2026; Revision Received: July 24, 2026; Accepted: July 28, 2026

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Positive psychological trait, such as gratitude, is depicted by the attitude of acknowledging and appreciating the positive things in life and is linked to a good mental state, resilience, and positive emotions (Chauhan et al., 2024). Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), on the other hand, is the anxiety that occurs because of the perception of having been locked out of significant experiences and is associated with emotional distress, anxiety, and loss of life skills (R et al., 2025).

Taking into account the increase in the levels of digital involvement and mental health issues in college environments, it is essential to explore the way in which the two constructs can be linked to the well-being of developing adults.

In the Indian socio-cultural environment, gratitude is often nurtured and practiced commonly through close connections with family, religious or spiritual traditions, and respecting elders. This cultural grounding further makes examining gratitude in relation to contemporary issues, such as Fear of missing out, among Indian youngsters more relevant. Therefore, this paper seeks to become acquainted with the association between Gratitude and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in the lives of college students.

Gratitude

Gratitude is the perception of what is significant and valuable to one person, and valuing it, that is, it is an extensive expression of thankfulness and appreciation (Sansone & Sansone, 2010). It may be regarded as a transient emotional reaction to an existing experience and as a more stable quality. Moreover, gratitude is considered an ethical value, an emotion, a behavioral process, a character trait, an attitude, and a way of coping. According to the APA, gratitude is a wish to thank and be happy because of receiving a gift, which can be a material item such as a gift from someone or a fortuitous occasion or encounter (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.).

Gratitude is based on the Latin term, i.e., *gratius*, which means thankfulness or grace. The focus of gratitude is externally placed on individuals and also on objects of an impersonal nature such as nature (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Gratitude is therefore a social feeling because it enhances connections with other people, prosocial actions, and the principle of reciprocity (Fox et al., 2015). It leads to calmness, joy, and physical fitness, as well as strengthened bonds. Sociobiologists also claim that one of the four emotions that increase the survival of the genome is thankfulness (the others being pity, anger, and guilt) (Bala & Thakur, 2021).

The positive feelings of hope, satisfaction, optimism, and energy are linked with gratefulness, so it is essential to well-being and fulfilment in life. It, therefore, serves as a provoking factor of social and positive affect based on respect and trust. It is a multifaceted idea which involves both emotional and intellectual aspects. Affective component implies the feelings of thankfulness to a person giving the gift, whereas cognitive gratefulness shows how a person makes a positive judgment of the advantages (such as the understanding of goodwill) (Zhang et al., 2022).

Watkins and colleagues (2023) characterize gratitude as a favorable affective response to what is considered a 'benefit', which one believes to be primarily provided by another person. The term benefit in this context is broadly defined because it can involve the introduction of something good in the life of an individual, though it may also refer to the

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avoidance of unwanted events or even the positive things that are seen in negative experiences.

They also emphasized on the “amplification theory of gratitude”, in which they imply that the feeling of thankfulness increases the realization of the positive aspects of life. Once humans know and understand what is beneficial to them, they work to obtain them by investing their personal resources in them, which consequently maintains their total well-being. The feeling of gratitude encourages people to enjoy blessings because, when one has a grateful mind, they will find such things to be more valuable.

Furthermore, gratitude improves the positivity associated with a person’s past. The reason behind this is that those individuals who practice thankfulness are more likely to remember the positive memories and they also get more joy out of it. Gratefulness, therefore, emphasizes positive values about the past experience, enhances present experience and increases future optimism through hope.

According to Fritz Heider, people become thankful when they are the recipients of a benefit that was given to them out of will of another. Therefore, gratitude is a multi-pronged event that consists of two aspects, which are as follows: an interpersonal context, whereby gratitude is extended to the other party; the second is the perception of intention, in which there is a need to know that the other party acted with goodwill.

Due to these, the feeling of gratitude is more closely connected to the feeling of being loved, valued, and taken care of. Individuals who have an attitude of gratitude are also more demonstrative in terms of cognitive agility, and they will always seek out things to be thankful about. This implies that gratefulness is also a coping strategy since the individuals who have the habit of doing so are inclined to think actively on the benefits, even on problematic circumstances (Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

The thankful attitude improves mood, resiliency, and elevates happiness. Halder and Mahato (2024) explain that the feeling of gratitude releases dopamine and serotonin (which increases the pleasure and positive mood) and activates the prefrontal cortex (which improves cognitive function), which activates the brain’s positive feedback loop. Such mechanisms of the brain, in turn, promote a sense of life satisfaction, well-being, and fulfillment. This observation is also supported by a research study that was conducted by Khanna and Singh (2016), which investigated the impact of an appreciation-based intervention on North Indian adolescents. The intervention contributed to better mental health, increased positive feelings, and better life satisfaction among the participants.

Fear of Missing Out

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is a feeling of intense desire to always be connected with other individuals and their activities in life, accompanied by a constant anxiety and fear that other people might be living fulfilling lifestyles and experiences where one is omitted (Przybylski et al., 2013). The problem is especially topical in the modern world due to the ongoing social comparison that is being driven by the very existence of smart devices and the possibility to connect to the internet at all times.

It has two primary elements: cognition (worry and overthinking) and behavior (strategies to reduce anxiety). These actions can include active (scrolling) and passive (through

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notifications) daily online checking that affects productivity (Elhai et al., 2020). This concept is further supported by the research by Karishma and Bhatt (2025), which indicates that there is a positive relationship between FoMO and social media addiction, indicating that the more one gets involved, the more they become afraid.

Przybylski et al. (2013) made use of the “Self-Determination Theory” to describe the notion of FoMO. According to the theory, it is essential to fulfill three fundamental needs, to maintain mental well-being and motivation: autonomy (self-direction), competence (effectiveness), and relatedness (social connection). It highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation, which is best promoted by means of social relationships. Consequently, it can be concluded that FoMO is a negative affective condition that occurs due to a deficiency in this need for social relatedness.

Another way to perceive FoMO is based on the concept of “Social Comparison Theory” which implies that people compare and assess their connections, accomplishments, and experiences in relation to others. This self-comparative tendency may result in the feeling being left out and dissatisfaction, which are central to the phenomenon of FoMO. People of young adulthood are more susceptible to such comparisons, so they fear this when they see other individuals achieving things opportunistically or enjoying better things (Littman-Ovadia & Russo-Netzer, 2024).

To put it simply, observing the lives of other people and not being a part of those experiences makes people doubt their own worth and could make them believe that they are not popular or are socially insignificant. They may become the ones who want to do a lot of things to be satisfied, depend on external validation, and be depressed (Jaiswal & Dangwal, 2023).

It is possible to define FoMO, therefore, as the insatiable desire to follow the glamorous lives of other individuals over the Internet, which leads to a state of constant anxiety. It is an everyday phenomenon among young people and has far-reaching effects that touch on their social, educational, and psychological lives. It is also the reason behind the decreased life satisfaction in this age and reduces their overall well-being, as they are more susceptible to the adverse effects of FoMO. Increased depressive symptoms, neuroticism, higher levels of anxiety, and negative expectations tendency is connected to the experience of FoMO (Jaworska & Iwanicka, 2024; Littman-Ovadia & Russo-Netzer, 2024; Tanhan et al., 2022).

As mentioned earlier, this phenomenon is particularly prone to university students since, at this stage, they are in a phase of developmental instability and in the process of exploration, where there is more focus on the significance of relationships and social acceptance. FoMO is associated with increased stress and lower scholastic success in this group (Elsayed, 2025).

FoMO may further lead to low self-worth, irritability, distractibility, a sense of exclusion, incessant urge to socialize (online and offline), and a compulsion to follow all the trends and loss of sleep (Fortis Healthcare, n.d.).

Therefore, by examining the mentioned constructs together, the current study intends to contribute to the scant yet increasingly developing body of research which tries to relate

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positive psychological resources to the pressures encountered by Indian college students in this digital era.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Thomas and George (2025) carried out research in order to examine the relationships among emotional distress, FoMO, and usage of social media by university students. Having a sample of 100 people, the results showed that high levels of FoMO were strongly related to the increased risk of maladaptive social media use and increased distress.

Chauhan et al. (2024) have investigated the association between life satisfaction and gratitude among 453 students (19-24 years). The findings showed that there is a positive, substantial link between gratitude and life satisfaction, and gratitude is also a predictor of psychological well-being.

Using the thematic approach, **Maulida (2024)** explored the concept of thankfulness in the Quran and how it can be applied in overcoming Fear of Missing out. The results demonstrated that thankfulness is essential in the reduction of adverse effects of FoMO and has a strong influence in decreasing emotions of jealousy, distress, and dissatisfaction, which normally occur as a result of social comparison.

Basit et al. (2024) investigated the effects of thankfulness on mental health and the variables that relate with it in 120 participants. The researchers concluded that there was a high negative link between gratitude, anxiety, and sadness as well as a beneficial relationship between thankfulness, stability in emotions and fulfilment in life. Gratefulness also demonstrated a significant favorable correlation with social connectivity and resilience.

The purpose of the study by **Srivastava and Vandana (2024)** was to identify the relationship between thankfulness and subjective well-being in 300 college pupils (ages 18-24). The results showed strong correlations among the variables, which confirmed that the feeling grateful directly predicted mental well-being and life satisfaction in these students.

Patani and Kiran (2023) conducted a study in order to analyze how the use of phones, FOMO, and social connectivity is related. The sample of 265 university students (18-25) revealed that there was an upward association between smartphone use and FoMO, whereas there was a negative correlation among social connectivity & FoMO.

An experimental study of 200 college students conducted by **Isave and Chetwani (2023)** showed that FoMO is a widespread and significant issue associated with negative consequences such as lower academic achievement and increased anxiety, lower esteem, and depression.

James et al. (2023) established an experiment involving 108 participants (18-25) to check the short-term effect of gratitude journaling on their mental condition. The conclusions indicated that their psychological wellness improved after the thankfulness journaling, which showed that gratitude recording is a valuable intervention in mental health.

In their study, **Rosyida and Romadhani (2022)** investigated how thankfulness influences FoMO in a study of 599 individuals. The results indicated that an increase in the degree of thankfulness is related to a reduction in FoMO by 7.7%.

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Anand et al. (2021) assessed the connection between life quality and gratefulness among 249 people. The outcome showed that the two had a strong relationship and mindfulness mediated the relationship.

Rationale of the study

Young adulthood, particularly in college life, is a phase of development where the individual is more emotionally sensitive and explores identity, as well as becomes more dependent on social relationships. In the modern world, college students have been exposed to the persistent social comparisons that have resulted in the increased prevalence of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). This has been associated with adverse psychological impacts and is a major threat to the mental stability of such a population.

At the same time, gratitude is an essential psychological resource, and it helps individuals focus on the positive things and social support they have, instead of on their inadequacies and lacking. Furthermore, in India, gratitude is traditionally encouraged in family relationships, cultural norms for respect, and religious practices, making it even more of a culturally relevant variable to look at.

Although current studies on these topics individually are slowly increasing, there is a great scarcity of research studies that examine the interaction between these two variables in one study, especially in reference to young adults in India. The study focuses on bridging this apparent gap in the literature and link positive psychological resources to stressors common in the digital age.

In its turn, the proposed study attempts to investigate the links between gratitude and Fear of Missing Out among Indian college students aged 18 to 25 years. The findings may have a potential implication on mental health programs in terms of incorporating gratitude-oriented strategies within preventive and supportive mental health initiatives to improve the life quality of young adults.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The present study aims to explore the relationship between Gratitude and Fear of Missing Out among Indian college students.

Objectives

1. To assess the gender difference based on gratitude and Fear of Missing Out among Indian college students.
2. To study the relationship between gratitude and Fear of Missing Out among Indian college students.
3. To study gratitude as a predictor of Fear of Missing Out among Indian college students.

Hypothesis

- **H1:** There will be **no significant gender difference** based on gratitude and Fear of Missing Out among Indian college students.
- **H2:** There will be **no significant relationship** between gratitude and Fear of Missing Out among Indian college students.

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- **H3:** Gratitude will **not significantly predict** Fear of Missing Out among Indian college students.

Operational definitions

- **Gratitude:** “A personal tendency to recognize, appreciate, and acknowledge thankfulness to the positive aspects of life. This is assessed through the Gratitude Questionnaire–6.”
- **Fear of Missing Out (FoMO):** “The sense of constant anxiety that one may be missing out on good social activities where others are having fun. It is assessed using the Fear of Missing Out Scale.”

Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative and correlational research design. Gender differences are assessed through descriptive statistics. Pearson’s correlation and regression analyses are carried out.

Variables

The independent variable is Gratitude, and the dependent variable is FoMO.

Sample

The sample includes 126 Indian college students (63 females & males respectively), aged 18-25 years, and is collected by random sampling to represent the target population.

Tools Used

- **GQ-6:** Gratitude Questionnaire, created by McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., and Tsang, J. (2002), is a self-report tool comprising of six questions that determine how grateful a human being is in his or her day-to-day life. In the Indian populations, it denotes high internal reliability (0.84) and high convergent validity (0.554) (Garg et al., 2021).
- **Fear of Missing Out Scale:** Fear of Missing Out scale (FoMOs) is a brief, self-reported assessment developed by Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, and Gladwell (2013) aimed at evaluating the intensity of the feeling of anxiety about missing out on something, especially among those related to friends. It is a 10-item measure. The scale shows a high internal consistency ($\alpha = .90$) and a high convergent validity with social media usage.

Statistical techniques

Descriptive analysis, Pearson’s correlation, and Regression analysis are used to assess gender differences, investigate relationships, and discover the predictive effects of the above-mentioned variables.

RESULTS & INTERPRETATION

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and t-value for study variables.

	Male		Female		t(126)	p	Cohen’s d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Gratitude	28.6	6.21	30.8	5.96	-2.06	.041	-0.368
FoMO	28.7	7.39	27.1	6.94	1.26	.212	0.224

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Table 1 indicates that females ($M = 30.8$, $SD = 5.96$) demonstrate more Gratitude levels than males ($M = 28.6$, $SD = 6.21$), which confirms gender differences in the matter. The t -value ($t(126) = -2.06$, $p = .041$) obtained indicates that gender is a major factor that influences the level of gratitude. The effect size (Cohen $d = -0.368$) represents a small to medium effect, which means that the difference is statistically significant but modest.

Conversely, the Fear of Missing Out results show that males ($M = 28.7$, $SD = 7.39$) obtained slightly higher scores in comparison with females ($M = 27.1$, $SD = 6.94$), but the difference is not significant ($t(126) = 1.26$, $p = .212$). The effect size (Cohen $d = 0.224$) is that of a small effect, hence the mean differences could be attributed to random variation.

Table 2 Correlation Analysis for study variables.

Variable	1	2
1. Gratitude	-	-0.178*
2. FoMO		-

* $p < .05$

As shown in Table 2, there is a significant negative relationship between Gratitude and Fear of Missing Out ($r = -0.178$, $p < .05$). This finding implies that the level of gratitude is related to low levels of Fear of Missing Out in the sample. In spite of the weak correlation strength, the relationship is meaningful and significant statistically, which shows that the two are correlated measures.

Table 3 Linear Regression Analysis for study variables.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.178 ^a	.032	.024	7.099

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gratitude

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	204.641	1	204.641	4.060	.046 ^b
	Residual	6249.399	124	50.398		
	Total	6454.040	125			

a. Dependent Variable: FoMO

b. Predictors: (Constant), Gratitude

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	34.081	3.126		10.903	.000
	Gratitude	-.208	.103	-.178	-2.015	.046

a. Dependent Variable: FoMO

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Table 3 suggests that Gratitude is a predictor of Fear of Missing Out, and the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 4.060$, $p = .046$). The percentage contribution of gratitude to FoMO variance is 3.2 ($R^2 = .032$). Moreover, the negative value of beta ($B = -0.208$, $\beta = -0.178$) indicates an inverse relation, which shows that gratitude is a critical negative predictor of FoMO in the sample.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the current research is to consider the gender variation in Gratitude and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), to examine the connection between these factors, and to determine the predictive capacity of gratitude on FoMO in Indian college students.

Gratitude is a positive psychological trait, which is connected to good emotional health. In the Indian socio-cultural environment, it is often cultivated and reinforced through reverence for older adults, emotional bonds with family, and long-standing religious values. FoMO is a state of anxiety as a result of the perceived social exclusion and comparison.

Seeing how these constructs relate to each other among the intended sample is important to realize how traditional positive values may help protect against psychological challenges. Thus, the findings are described and discussed in terms of the formulated hypotheses and literature.

H1: There will be **no significant gender difference** based on gratitude and Fear of Missing Out among Indian college students.

The outcome shows that there is statistically significant difference in gratitude between genders. The female students score higher ($M = 30.8$) than the male students do ($M = 28.6$) on the same. This could be due to the possibility that females would be more inclined to identifying and value the positive experiences and social support. This is in line with Indian studies that reveal that female college students exhibit greater levels of gratitude when compared to males in young adult samples (Gulia, 2022).

However, there is no statistically significant gender difference in the case of Fear of Missing Out. This is an indication that both genders experience FoMO at the same level, perhaps because of equal exposure to social media and shared developmental pressures in young adulthood. This is echoed in results discussed by Patani and Kiran (2023), who described the levels of FoMO among the Indian university students to have similar distribution across the gender groups. In this way, the null hypothesis gets challenged partly because it is found that there were gender differences in gratitude but not FoMO.

H2: There will be **no significant relationship** between gratitude and Fear of Missing Out among Indian college students.

Fear of Missing Out and Gratitude are also considerably negatively correlated ($r = -0.178$, $p < .05$), suggesting that greater gratitude is related with lower FoMO. The result is consistent with prior studies, including those by Rosyida and Romadhani (2022) who found that increased thankfulness is connected to a decreased FoMO.

The inverse relationship is also comprehended with reference to the “social comparison theory”, since gratitude can minimize upward social comparisons by creating contentment

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and a sense of satisfaction in one's own life. These outcomes also align with the beneficial role of gratitude that is established in an Indian literature, which connects gratitude with well-being and positive psychological consequences in college students (Hemarajarajeswari and Gupta, 2022). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, showing that gratitude is significantly related to FoMO.

H3: Gratitude will **not significantly predict** Fear of Missing Out among Indian college students.

The predictive role of gratitude on FoMO is supported by the regression analysis. The findings demonstrate that gratitude accounts for 3.2% variance in FoMO ($R^2 = .032$) and is a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -0.178$, $p = .046$). This shows that an increased level of gratitude is related to a reduced FoMO in the sample.

It is possible that this is the case as thankful persons dwell more on the positive moments of their life and the social wealth, decreasing the necessity to be aware of what other people are doing all the time. This contentment might cushion against distress associated with social exclusion, and therefore reduce Fear of Missing Out.

Thematic research emphasizes the theoretical applicability of gratitude in alleviating FoMO-related anxiety, envy, and dissatisfaction with the help of cognitive and spiritual perspectives (Maulida, 2024). Further, a wider body of FoMO literature also points to its association with emotional distress and implies that positive psychological factors like thankfulness have meaning in reducing the impact of FoMO among young adults by concentrating on and appreciating what one already possesses (Zhong, 2023).

These results complement the present outcomes and indicate that the beneficial impacts of gratitude apply to the minimization of constructs of anxiety, such as FoMO, among Indian college students, even though the elucidated variance is modest. These small effect sizes do not come as a surprise since FoMO is affected by various psychological and social media variables other than gratitude. Thereby, the null hypothesis is repudiated.

Taken together, the results of this research underscore the importance of gratitude as a positive psychological tool that can be integrated into mental health programs or interventions to alleviate FoMO among young adults.

CONCLUSION

Against the background of growing digitalization and social comparison, the need to understand the contribution of traditional positive qualities, like gratitude, is critical in supporting the mental well-being of young adults, making this study vital.

The **results** of the current study indicate that female college students are identified to have much higher levels of gratitude than male students but no gender difference is found in Fear of Missing Out. Gratitude is found to be significantly and negatively related to Fear of Missing Out and also emerges as a significant negative predictor of FoMO in Indian college students. These findings imply that more grateful students are less likely to develop anxiety about missing the opportunity to experience social events. Thus, all the null hypotheses are dismissed.

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Implications and Recommendations of the Study:

- College mental health programs may include structured **gratitude practices** (e.g., gratitude journals, thankfulness reflections, etc.) to increase emotional well-being, decrease negative affect, anxiety, stress, and depression, and improve positive affect (Diniz et al., 2023; Tolcher et al., 2022).
- Gratitude forward **positive psychology interventions** can be used in counseling environments to increase life satisfaction, achieve improvements in peace of mind, and resilience since gratitude exercises have been shown to increase subjective well-being and reduce negative affect among youth samples (Iqbal and Dar, 2021; Rajan and Sandhu, 2025).
- **Technology-assisted gratitude tools** can be considered as one possible way of expanding accessibility and conductibility within the hectic college timetable, and reducing stress symptoms and anxiety related to FoMO. Examples include digital gratitude journaling, apps, telehealth, or structured online reflection tasks (Fuller, 2025; Kandi and Kunasetti, 2023).
- **Preventive mental health initiatives** can be applied in educational settings, which incorporate gratitude-building practices into college curriculums since gratitude-based interventions result in profound positive affect and mental health outcomes.

Nevertheless, there are some **limitations** of the present work. The sample is limited to Indian college students aged 18-25 years, which limits the generalizability. Use of self-report measures risks bias in response, and the study is cross-sectional, limiting causal conclusions.

Therefore, **future studies** can be dedicated to the development and testing of college-based gratitude workshops to alleviate FoMO, cultural variation in gratitude and FoMO with a bigger sample size, and the longitudinal advantages of the incorporation of digital gratitude practices in the everyday student experience. Researchers can also incorporate differences in these variables based on educational stream chosen by students (ex- Arts, Science, etc.).

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Rana, A., & Mahapatra, M. (2026). The Relationship between Gratitude and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among Indian College Students: An Exploration. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 14(3), 606-619. DIP:18.01.051.20261403, DOI:10.25215/1403.051