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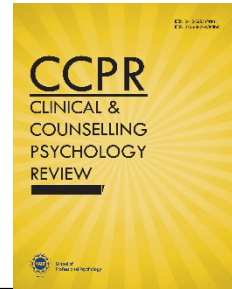
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Fear of Missing Out and Social Curiosity as Predictors of Social Media Addiction in Young Adults of Pakistan

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Abstract

The current study was carried out to examine the effect of fear of missing out and social curiosity on social media addiction in young adults of Pakistan. A sample of $N=405$ individuals was approached through online survey due to lock down. It was a cross sectional research design and data was collected through convenient sampling technique. The individuals both men and women from age ranging between 15-30 were included in the study. Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOs), Social Curiosity subscale of a five-dimensional Curiosity Scale and Social Media Addiction Scale were used to assess the study variables. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The results revealed that fear of missing out and social curiosity positively predicted social media addiction. No significant statistical differences were observed in terms of gender and age groups.

Keywords: fear of missing out, Pakistani young adults, social curiosity, social media addiction

Introduction

The social media platforms comprise of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and WhatsApp, etc. With the advancement in technology and vastness of internet services, social media is easily accessible to everyone in any area of the country. The integration of social media in our lives and the increment in number of users each day calls for the interest of behavioral analysts, psychologists and social scientists to explore its roots, resultant behaviors and associated factors for the understanding of human behaviors. In a report, Dean (2021) reported that there are 3.96 billion active social media users in the world. This number is only increasing each year due to easy internet access, better speed and the introduction of new and innovative applications. According to Kemp (2021) the social media users in Pakistan in January 2021 were said to be 46.0 million.

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According to a report on Pakistan Population by Worldometer (2021) the population of Pakistan was 225,568,591 with the median age of 22.8 years by August 6, 2021. Another survey found that 64% of the country's population lies below age 30 whereas 29% of it lies somewhere between the range of 15 to 29 years. With such a large number of young populations present in the country, there is a chance of significantly large number of youth related problems requiring serious attention. This study aims to address those problems with regard to social curiosity and fear of missing out in terms of social media addiction considering the young population of the country (Ahmad, 2018).

For the year 2020, after the onset of pandemic and lockdown, the constant scrolling of cell-phones and checking of social media apps has increased. According to Statista (2021) the daily social media usage in years 2019 and 2020 was observed to be 145 minutes. This was a 3-minute increase from the previous year's 142. With significant changes in our social life, social media was the new normal. It was used to access information, connecting with family and friends and staying up-to-date on the current world situations (Wagner et al., 2021). The urge to know what others are up to and the need to be constantly aware of their whereabouts coupled with the incessant checking of the same applications repeatedly led to social media addiction. Social media addiction is being overly concerned about social media in such a way that it hinders with your normal daily functioning (Hilliard & Parisi, 2021).

Literature review

Yuan et al. (2021) conducted a study with Chinese individuals and found that fear of missing out partially mediated the relationship between depressive symptoms and problematic smartphone use. The mediation was significant and fear of missing out was associated with not only psychopathology symptoms but also with over-use related to the internet.

Another study was conducted to figure out the predictors of social media use and addiction. The data analysis revealed that fear of missing out predicted both social media usage and addiction. Moreover, younger age was also found as a predictor of social media use and addiction (Blackwell et al., 2017).

According to a doctoral dissertation (Irlianti et al., 2021) social curiosity was found responsible for 16.4% contribution of change in fear of missing

out. The participants were mainly adolescents, thus supporting the argument of greater proportion of younger population involved in social media addiction. The dynamic parameter which is the curiosity level of an individual continues to evolve throughout the life of an individual. The model concluded that curiosity increases the spread of information dispersing in all networks (Viga-Oiliveros, [2017](#))

Rozgonjuk et al. ([2021](#)) conducted a study on German participants concerning gender variations and other traits and facets along with the big-five personality traits associated with fear of missing out. The study revealed that younger age individuals had more high scores on fear of missing out. Whereas, gender variations had no impact on the score of fear of missing out. Another research conducted on fear of missing out and personality revealed that fear of missing out had significant positive effect on attitude towards Instagram use such as number of followers, social media addictive tendencies and even the total number of accounts the respondents followed (Moore & Craciun, [2020](#)).

Hartung and Renner ([2013](#)) differentiated between gossip and curiosity as gossip is the accumulation of information of entertainment related purposes whereas social curiosity is the urge to know more about people around you; their habits and thinking patterns. Participants although did rate themselves more on socially curious aspects but rated less on gossip scale. This difference in ratings can be attributed to the fact that cultural attributions and negative connotations vary regarding gossip whereas, for social curiosity, a way to know more about your environment and people in it, also a way to gain proper understanding of both these facets of a largely complex environment for survival.

Nawaz et al. ([2021](#)) conducted a study on the effects of social media in south Asian community mainly focusing Pakistani youth. His findings revealed that social media was linked with depression and loneliness among the youth. However, depression had strong and loneliness had comparatively weak correlation with social media use. He acknowledged that social media has both positive and negative effects on a person but its precursor towards depressive tendencies cannot be ignored.

Cheng et al. ([2021](#)) conducted a study on social media addictions in different nations. It was a meta-analysis concluding that while studying social media addictions in any nation; the cultural factors, national factors,

and values should be taken in consideration as they vary from place to place and can provide sound basis for explaining and understanding behavior in cultural context. Results also showed that the prevalence for social media addiction was 31% for collectivist countries whereas 14% for individualistic countries, hence the cultural factors and scheme used must be considered when determining prevalence in different cultures.

Rationale

As it has been observed that majority of population of Pakistan is comprised of young adults. During Covid-19 pandemic, being in social isolation had adverse effect on almost every age group of people. Young adults got indulge in social media usage more than usual. Different predictors of social media addiction needed to be explored to figure out the most powerful ones. Fear of missing out and social curiosity were observed to be the strong predictors of social media addiction in normal situation. This study will be useful in addressing social media addiction via fear of missing out and social curiosity in terms of Pakistani population.

Objectives

This research basically aimed to explore the impact of fear of missing out and social curiosity on social media addiction. The objective of this study is:

- To investigate the effect of fear of missing out and social curiosity on social media addiction on 15-30 age group of Pakistani population.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for this research against the objectives:

H1: There is a significant impact of fear of missing out and social curiosity on social media addiction.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between fear of missing out, social curiosity and social media addiction.

H3: There is a significant gender difference in fear of missing out, social curiosity and social media addiction.

H4: The variations with regards to fear of missing out, social curiosity and social media addiction are not significant in terms of 19-22 and 23-26 age groups.

Method

Cross-sectional research design was used to carry out the study.

Sample

The sample size for the study was $N = 405$. The sample was drawn by using non-probability convenient sampling. This sampling procedure was used because lockdown had been imposed and it was difficult to administer the face to face survey. Therefore, samples from 3 cities were drawn on the basis of researcher's convenience. Some participants were also approached by using snowball sampling.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Demographic Variables (N=405)

Demographic Variables	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percent %
Age		
15-18	38	9.4
19-22	232	57.3
23-26	106	26.2
27-30	29	7.2
Marital Status		
Single	369	91.1
Married	33	8.1
Other (Widow/Widower)	1	.2
Divorced	2	.5
Sex		
Male	135	33.3
Female	270	66.7

Demographic Variables	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percent %
Level of Education		
Matriculation	10	2.5
Intermediate	44	10.9
Bachelor's (4 or 2 Years)	244	60.2
Masters	104	25.7
PhD	3	.7

Table 1 indicates the frequency distribution of various demographic variables for a sample size of (N=405) included in this study. Four demographic variables with respective characteristics age (divided into sub-groups; 15-18, 19-22, 23-26 and 27-30), marital status (on dimensions; single, married, other (widow or widower) and divorced), sex (male and female) and level of education (divided on the levels; Matriculation, Intermediate, Bachelors, Masters and PhD) were included in this study.

Assessment Measures

Following assessment measures were used to assess measure the study variables:

- Demographics Sheet (5 items)
- Fear of Missing Out Scale: FoMOs (10 items)
- Social Curiosity subscale of Five-Dimensional Curiosity Scale (5DC) (5 items)
- Social Media Addiction Scale-Student Form (29 items)

Demographics Sheet

The demographic sheet comprised of name (which was optional in case participants were not comfortable in disclosing their identity), sex, level of education, marital status and age group.

Fear of Missing Out Scale: FoMOs

The Fear of Missing Out Scale (Przybylski et al., [2013](#)) is a ten item five-point Likert scale with scores ranging from 1 (Not at all true of me) to 5 (Extremely true of me). The scores were calculated by taking mean of all the individual items. Higher scores indicate greater fear of missing out and

lower scores indicate low fear of missing out. The scale had no reverse items. The scale was free for academic use. The Cronbach Alpha for Fear of Missing Out Scale in this study was at 0.752.

Social Curiosity: A subscale of Five-Dimensional Curiosity Scale (5DC)

The five-dimensional curiosity scale (Kashdan et al., [2018](#)) is a seven-point Likert scale having five subscales namely, Joyous Exploration, Deprivation Sensitivity, Stress Tolerance (entire scale reverse scored), Social Curiosity and Thrill Seeking. The scores range from 1 (Does not describe me at all) to 7 (Completely describes me). The social curiosity sub-scale was used in this study as it was the variable under study. The scoring of the sub-scale was calculated by computing the average. Higher scores indicate higher social curiosity whereas lower scores indicate low social curiosity. The scale was used after seeking permission from the author. The Cronbach Alpha for the Social Curiosity sub-scale in this study was at 0.676.

Social Media Addiction Scale-Student Form: SMAS-SF

The social media addiction scale-student form (Şahin, [2018](#)) is a 29 item five-point Likert scale. The scores range from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The scale had no reverse coded item. The scoring was done by computing a mean of all the items. The scale was used after seeking permission from the author. It has four sub-scales namely, Virtual Tolerance sub-scale which consists of the first five items, Virtual Communication sub-scale which consists of items between 6 to 14, Virtual Problem sub-scale which consists of items between 15-23 and lastly Virtual Information sub-scale which consists of items from 24-29. Higher scores mean the person is a social media addict whereas lower scores indicate that the person is not a social media addict. The Cronbach Alpha for Social Media Addiction Scale-Student Form in this study was at 0.914. Whereas the Cronbach Alpha for the respective sub-scales were at 0.778 for Virtual Tolerance, 0.780 for Virtual Communication, 0.835 for Virtual Problem and 0.740 for Virtual Information.

Procedure

The survey was administered online using Google Forms because of lockdown being imposed and educational institutes being closed. The link was circulated in WhatsApp and Facebook groups using convenient and

snowball sampling to reach maximum number of participants. The participants were asked to read the informed consent before proceeding to the demographics sheet which was then followed by the three scales used in the study i.e., Fear of Missing Out Scale: FoMOs, Social Curiosity: A subscale of Five-Dimensional Curiosity Scale (5DC) and the Social Media Addiction Scale-Student Form. The survey was to be completed in a single sitting and took approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

Ethical considerations

The participants of the study were informed about the prospects of taking part in this study. The risk/harm in this study was zero to none. Still the participants were ensured that they could leave this study any time they wished. They were properly instructed about the measures which were administered for data collection. They were guaranteed privacy and protection of their data. All the obtained data was to be remained strictly confidential and was used for research purposes only. For participants who expressed interest in the research results were emailed the results after the data analysis was done. No type of identifying information was taken from the participants.

Results

Hypotheses Testing

Statistical analyses were performed in SPSS Version 25 to test the hypotheses. Regression analysis was performed to explore the effect of social curiosity and fear of missing out on social media addiction. Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between the study variables. Moreover, independent sample t-test was used to explore the difference in study variables on the basis of gender and different age groups.

Table 2

Regression analysis for Fear of Missing Out, Social Curiosity and Social Media Addiction (N=405)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
(Constant)	47.141	2.987	.000
Fear of Missing Out	1.241	.122	.000

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Social Curiosity	1.454	.725	.046
<i>R</i> ²	.281***		

Table 2 describes the multiple regression analysis to predict social media addiction from fear of missing out and social curiosity. The overall model was significant ($p < .001$). the analysis also revealed that fear of missing out and social curiosity were responsible for 28.1% variance in social media addiction. Fear of missing out was statistically significant in impacting social media addiction ($p < .001$) whereas social curiosity also had a significant impact ($p > .05$).

Table 3

Correlational Analysis of Fear of Missing Out, Social Curiosity and Social Media Addiction (N=405)

	1	2	3
1. Fear of missing out	-		
2. Social Curiosity	.447**	-	
3. Social Media Usage	.523**	.309**	-

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson product moment correlation described in table 3 between fear of missing out, social curiosity and social media addiction was found to be positive and statistically significant. The correlation between fear of missing out and social curiosity was found to be positively low and statistically significant ($r = .466, p < .001$). The correlation between fear of missing out and social media addiction was found to be moderately positive and statistically significant ($r = .523, p < .001$). Lastly, the correlation between social curiosity and social media addiction was found to be positively low and statistically significant ($r = .309, p < .001$). Hence, the hypothesis was supported.

Table 4

Independent sample t-Test for Gender Differences in Fear of Missing Out, Social Curiosity and Social Media Addiction (N=405)

Variables	Male (N=135)		Female (N=270)		<i>t</i> (403)	<i>P</i>	95% CI	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Fear of Missing out	25.71	6.43	23.75	7.08	2.71	.007	.54	3.39
Social Curiosity	3.63	1.17	3.24	1.14	3.24	.001	.15	.63
Social Media Addiction	82.40	16.44	82.30	18.61	.06	.954	-3.46	3.67

Table 4 indicates an independent samples t-test conducted to compare the gender differences in terms of fear of missing out, social curiosity and social media addiction. The statistical analysis revealed that there are no significant differences ($p \geq 0.001$) in the scores for both male and female participants in terms of fear of missing out, social curiosity and social media addiction.

Table 5

Independent sample t-test for variations in age sub-groups with regards to Fear of Missing Out, Social Curiosity and Social Media Addiction (N=405)

Variables	19-22 years		23-26 years		<i>t</i> (336)	<i>p</i>	95% CI	
	<i>N</i> = 232		<i>N</i> = 106				<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Fear of Missing out	24.67	6.62	23.17	7.14	1.88	.06	-.07	3.06
Social Curiosity	3.34	1.16	3.26	1.09	.57	.57	-.19	.34
Social Media Addiction	83.33	17.12	79.74	19.48	1.71	.08	-.54	7.71

Table 5 displays an independent samples t-test conducted to compare the variations in sub-groups of age 19-22 and 23-26 with regard to fear of missing out, social curiosity and social media addiction. The statistical analysis revealed that there are no significant differences ($p > .001$) in the scores, hence proving the hypothesis.

Discussion

The current study was intended to explore the effect of fear of missing out and social curiosity on social media addiction in young adults of Pakistan. It was hypothesized that fear of missing out and social curiosity positively predict social media addiction in young adults. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between fear of missing out, social curiosity and social media addiction. Moreover, there is a significant gender difference in fear of missing out, social curiosity and social media addiction. It was also hypothesized that the variations with regards to fear of missing out, social curiosity and social media addiction are not significant in terms of 19-22 and 23-26 age groups.

Fear of missing out and social media addiction positively predict social media addiction in young adults of Pakistan. This finding is in line with the previous research conducted by Sultan (2021) which stated that fear of missing out indirectly impacts social media addiction in a way that increased levels of the fear of missing out are likely to have an impact on social media addiction along-with self-disclosure activities on social media. Franchina et al. (2018) describes fear of missing out as an important component in social media addiction among teenagers.

There was a significant gender difference in social curiosity where as non-significant difference in fear of missing out and social media addiction. These findings are not supported by the previous studies. Among the many varying reasons for social media addiction in men and women, a research conducted on university students to explore the reasons for social media addiction concluded that despite the any reasons for being addicted to social media, male participants posited that they were more drawn towards making new friends while on the other hand female participants wanted to stay in contact with their real-life friends via the medium (Aksoy, 2018).

There was non-significant difference in fear of missing out, social curiosity and social media addiction in young adults of age groups 19 to 22 and 23-26. These findings are also not supported by previous studies.

According to Josifovska (2021), 34% of young adults experience the fear of missing out if they are not present on social media. From a feature published in *Social Media Fact Sheet (2021)* surveys conducted from 2005-2021 showed that although the pioneers of social media usage were young adults and still continue to use it heavily but over time the usage of older adults of at least one social media application as asked in the survey has only showed an increased line graph.

The goals of psychology as described by Cherry (2019) in her article include understanding and explaining behavior. Researchers have always sought to offer the best possible explanations for human behavior through various precise and articulate methods of data collection both qualitative and quantitative. However, sometimes situational and environmental factors tamper with behavior. There is no doubt in the idea that because of the global pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, people might have had a lot of free time on their hands and hence the results showed the way they were. Research on social media and related behaviors is not a problem for future or past, it is an ongoing phenomenon where various studies continue to contribute towards the vast literature, which is what this research has also aimed at.

Most of the people use social media to see what their friends are up to or what others are doing (Aksoy, 2018). Before the pandemic, people were updated on a daily basis mostly face to face, however as the world had to shut down because of the pandemic, banning of flights and restrictions on travel and gathering one could assume that the social media usage has been increased as people are using it to make up for the lost physical interactions eventually leading to the desire to know everything what others are up to and the fear to miss out on in life because of the restrictions posed.

Conclusion

This research study was carried with an aim in mind, to understand the behaviors of Pakistani population in terms of association of fear of missing out and social curiosity on social curiosity on a restricted age group i.e., 15–30-year-olds. This research described 4 tentative hypotheses and provided results (significant or non-significant) for them. Data was collected through quantitative methods administered online via google forms due to the third wave of pandemic and resultant lockdown.

Limitations

Due to time and money constraints, the data had to be collected using a quantitative approach.

Further recommendations

To pave path for future researches on same variables, researchers might:

- Incorporate ethnicities to clarify whether differences in behaviors exist or not.
- More cities should be included to be able to generalize the results.
- Cultural and religious factors could be taken into consideration as well.

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