A Study on Impact of Smartphone Usage and Fear of Missing Out [FOMO] Among Older Adults of Raipur

Dipali Singh -MBA, Amity University, Chhattisgarh

Dr. Monica Sainy – Head of Department (ABS), Amity University, Chhattisgarh

ABSTRACT

Smartphones have become a widely popular activity globally due to their computer-like features and applications. Additionally, they have become a significant part of people's everyday lives. However, for a small percentage of individuals, overusing smartphones may lead to smartphone addiction. As a result, the current study examined the influence of smartphone and social networking site usage, fear of missing out, and perceived self-efficacy on smartphone addiction in adults. According to the results, excessive smartphone usage and an increased fear of missing out seem to contribute to smartphone addiction.

Problematic smartphone usage, associated with impaired daily functioning, has gained increased attention among researchers. However, extant research is focusing on adolescents and younger adults. This paper investigates smartphone usage among older adults, of which less is known. To do so, we conducted a cross-sectional survey of 50 participants of smartphone users (45+ years) in Raipur. We examined the contributing roles of loneliness, habit, social influence, emotional gain, fear of missing out, self-control, and problematic smartphone usage. We further investigated how older adults engage with their smartphones.

This study explores the relationship between smartphone usage and the experience of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among older adults. While smartphones offer numerous benefits for older users, including enhanced communication and autonomy, emerging evidence suggests they may also expose users to psychological stressors such as FOMO. It explores the complex relationship between smartphone usage and the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among older adults. While smartphones enhance connectivity and autonomy for aging populations, they also introduce psychological stressors commonly associated with younger users. This paper examines how FOMO manifests among older users, its psychosocial effects, and implications for technology design and mental well-being. By addressing a gap in age-specific digital research, this study aims to inform age-inclusive digital literacy and mental health strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The use of smartphones has grown significantly in the past ten years, appealing to individuals of all age groups from children to seniors. The introduction of smartphones and other wireless mobile devices has led to a rise in the frequency of digital activities that were previously conducted on laptops and desktop computers Primarily because of their ability to connect to the internet, smartphones provide a wide range of activities, including gaming, music listening, and social interaction. While research has looked into how older adults utilize the Internet, there is still limited understanding of their specific engagement with smartphones. The surge in smartphone usage has resulted in both beneficial and detrimental effects. For instance, smartphones assist individuals in managing their work, enhancing their availability, and staying connected with loved ones. Conversely, excessive smartphone use can become an issue and result in serious repercussions. Much of the existing research regarding the adverse effects of excessive smartphone usage has focused primarily on children and teenagers. However, there is less understanding of problematic smartphone usage (PSU) among older adults. PSU is defined by a persistent urge to use the

smartphone that is hard to control, leading to compromised daily functioning. Although problematic smartphone utilization has not yet been documented in older adults, the growing prevalence of smartphone use in this demographic raises questions about whether they might also experience PSU.

The rise of smartphone technology has transformed the way people interact, access information, and manage daily tasks. Although traditionally associated with younger generations, smartphone adoption among older adults has increased significantly in recent years. This demographic shift has brought both opportunities and challenges. While smartphones enhance connectivity and independence, they may also lead to psychological stressors, including the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), a phenomenon characterized by anxiety over missed social experiences. This rapid adoption brings new challenges, particularly in how older users interact with digital platforms, especially social media. One such challenge is the emergence of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)—a psychological phenomenon linked to compulsive digital behavior and social anxiety. Traditionally studied among youth, FOMO is increasingly recognized as relevant across age groups, including older adults who engage in online social comparison and digital surveillance of family or peers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leung, Smith, and McLaughlin (2019) highlight how smartphones offer increased independence, access to telehealth, and better social inclusion for the elderly. Older adults use smartphones for texting, video calling, browsing news, playing games, and participating in social networks such as Facebook and WhatsApp.

Many older adults struggle with technological literacy, lack of confidence, or accessibility concerns. These obstacles can lead to frustration and partial adoption. Furthermore, increased engagement with digital media brings exposure to curated lives and experiences, which may foster feelings of inadequacy or exclusion (Baker & Algorta, 2019).

FOMO is measured using the FOMO Scale (Przybylski et al., 2013), which includes statements such as, "I get worried when I find out my friends are having fun without me." While research on FOMO in older adults is scarce, the mechanisms that drive FOMO—social comparison, emotional regulation, and belongingness—are not age-bound.

Alt (2018) and Vannucci et al. (2017) found that adults of all ages, including older ones, may experience FOMO due to digital connectivity. While the form and content of FOMO may differ (e.g., family events vs. peer parties), its emotional effects—loneliness, regret, and anxiety—remain consistent.

Keles, McCrae, and Grealish (2020) note that screen-based FOMO can worsen existing mental health conditions, especially in vulnerable or lonely individuals.

Park and Lee (2020) found that loneliness and social isolation among older adults were significant predictors of smartphone overuse. Additionally, decreased physical activity and increased sedentary behavior were observed in older users with PSU patterns.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To examine the extent of smartphone usage and its psychological effects among older adults.
- To assess the relationship between smartphone use and FOMO in the older adult population.
- To identify patterns of problematic smartphone use (PSU) and its potential impact on feelings of social connection or loneliness.
- To determine if FOMO is a significant predictor of PSU in older adults.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Design:

This project will be using primary as well as secondary data. The primary sources could be used to collect the facts from the respondents for the correct results for the observe while the secondary sources are referred for the theoretical references.

Geographical Area:

The research of the project was conducted mainly within the economic boundaries of Raipur.

Data collection procedure:

The data for the research project is mainly collected from the questionnaire and a few secondary records along with books, journals, studies papers and articles were used.

Sample Size:

The sample size for this research study is 50.

Data analysis process:

Tables, graphs and descriptive statistical tools are used to research the facts accumulated from the questionnaire, journals, articles and studies papers.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
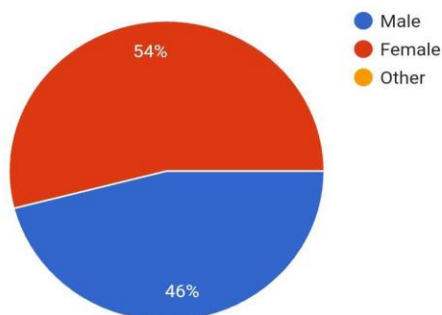
➢   **Age**
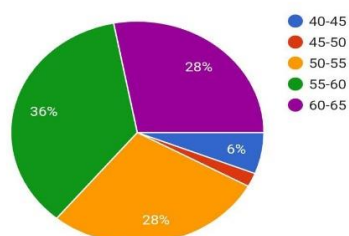
Interpretation

The majority of respondents (92%) are aged 50 and above, with the highest representation (36%) in the 55–60 age group. Younger age groups (40–50) are minimally represented, making up only 8% of the total.
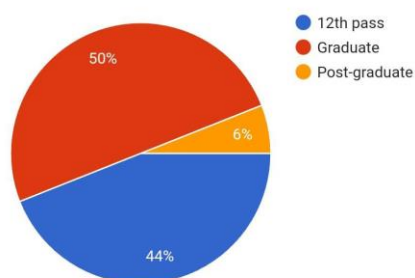
➢   **Gender**

Gender

50 responses

Interpretation: The gender distribution shows a slight female majority, with 54% female and 46% male respondents. No respondents identified as "Other."

➢   **Education**

Education Level

50 responses

Interpretation: Half of the respondents (50%) are graduates, followed by 44% who have completed 12th grade, while only 6% hold a post-graduate degree. This indicates that most participants have basic to intermediate educational qualifications.

I feel left out when I see photos of family or friends gathered without me.

50 responses
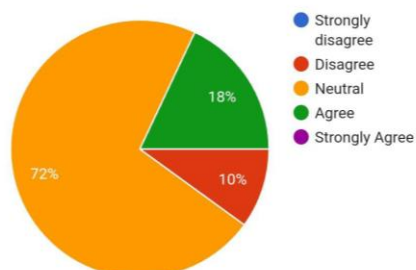
Interpretation: A majority of respondents (72%) feel neutral about feeling left out when seeing group photos without them, while 18% agree and 10% disagree, indicating mixed but mostly indifferent emotional responses

I feel anxious when I cannot check my smartphone for a while.

50 responses
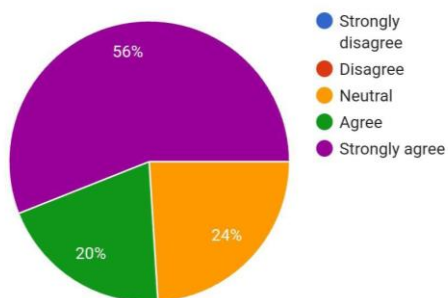
Interpretation: A significant majority (56%) strongly agree that they feel anxious when unable to check their smartphone, while 20% agree and 24% remain neutral, indicating high smartphone dependency among respondents.

I frequently check my phone to stay updated with family or social events.
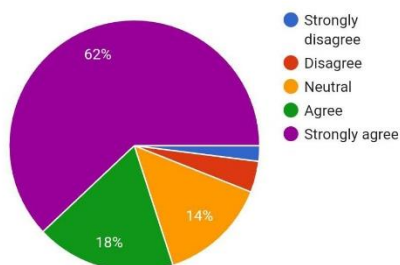
50 responses
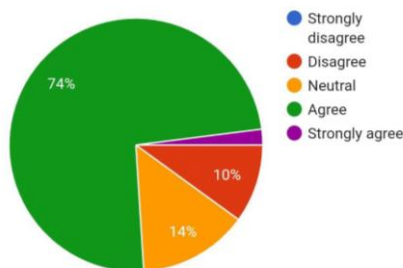
Interpretation: A large majority (74%) of respondents agree that they frequently check their phones to stay updated with family or social events, highlighting a strong reliance on smartphones for social connectivity.

After using social media, I sometimes feel more lonely or isolated.

50 responses

Interpretation: This chart shows that a significant majority—62%—of respondents strongly agree that they feel pressure to respond quickly to messages or notifications. Combined with the 10% who agree, 72% of participants feel some degree of pressure to respond quickly, indicating a strong social or psychological influence tied to smartphone communication.

I compare my daily
life with what others
post on social media.

50 responses
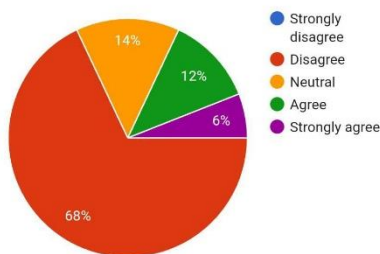
Interpretation: This chart indicates that the majority of respondents—68%—disagree with the statement that they compare their daily lives with what others post on social media. Only 12% agree and 6% strongly agree, totaling just 18% who actively engage in such comparisons.

The remaining 14% are neutral, suggesting some indifference or occasional influence. This implies that while social media comparison does occur, most of these 50 respondents are either aware of its effects and avoid it or don't feel influenced by what others post.

After using social
media, I sometimes
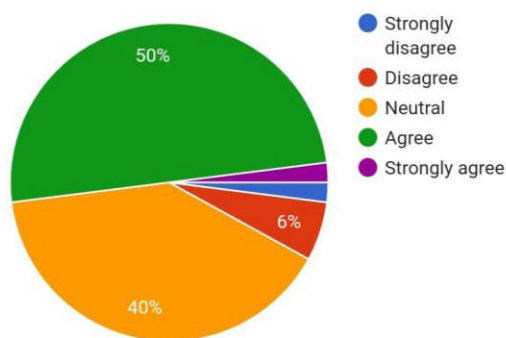feel more lonely or
isolated.

50 responses
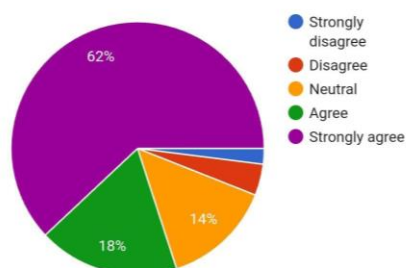
Interpretation: This chart shows that 80% of respondents (62% strongly agree + 18% agree) feel lonely or isolated after using social media, indicating a strong negative emotional impact. Only a small percentage disagree (4%) or strongly disagree (2%), while 14% remain neutral.

I feel disconnected when I miss updates in family or friend groups.

50 responses

Interpretation: A majority (80%) of respondents feel lonely or isolated after using social media, indicating its negative emotional impact. This suggests that social media may contribute to feelings of disconnection rather than connection.

I often scroll through social media without liking or commenting.

50 responses
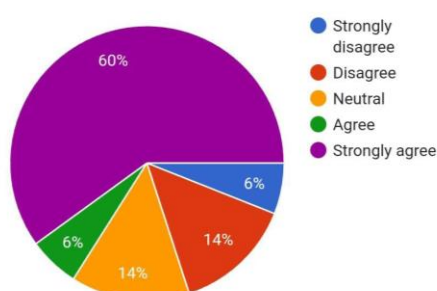
Interpretation: The majority of respondents (60%) strongly agree that they scroll through social media without liking or commenting, indicating a passive browsing behavior. In contrast, only a small percentage (6%) strongly disagree, showing that active engagement is relatively rare among this group.
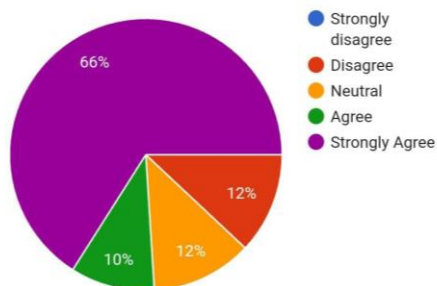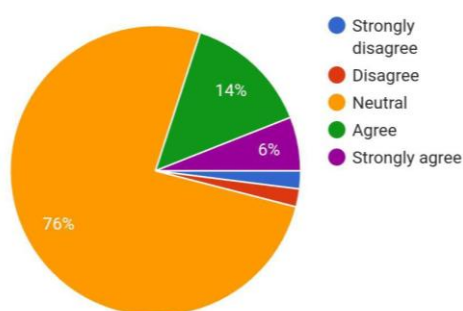
Interpretation: A significant majority (66%) of respondents strongly agree that using their smartphone makes them feel more connected to family and friends. Only a small portion (12%) disagrees, suggesting that smartphones are largely seen as positive tools for maintaining social connections.

Interpretation: A majority of respondents (76%) feel neutral about the worry that others enjoy more when they're offline, indicating mixed or uncertain feelings.

FINDINGS

- The study showed growing emotional dependence on smartphones, even among older adults.
- Smartphones serve as a primary tool for social engagement.
- The study indicates a moderate presence of FOMO in this age group.
- Social comparison might be less intense in older adults compared to younger users.
- The study shows behavioral patterns similar to younger users but possibly driven by family connectivity rather than peer pressure.
- Mixed Impact on Emotional Well-being indicating both positive and negative psychological effects.

SUGGESTIONS

- Promote digital literacy programs to help older adults navigate smartphones and social media responsibly.
- Encourage family involvement in digital interactions to reduce feelings of exclusion among elderly users.
- Advocate for mindful smartphone use and discourage excessive scrolling or dependence on social media.
- Provide mental health support for older adults experiencing FOMO-related stress or anxiety.
- Include larger and more diverse samples in future research for better generalization of findings.
- Explore rural vs. urban differences in smartphone use and FOMO experiences among the elderly.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the influence of smartphone usage and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among older adults in Raipur. The findings indicate that while smartphones serve as a valuable tool for social connection, they also contribute to feelings of anxiety, pressure, and social comparison in some individuals. Many participants showed moderate to neutral responses, reflecting both the growing acceptance and emerging concerns around digital habits in later life.

The research highlights the need for balanced and mindful smartphone use in older populations. Promoting digital literacy, fostering social inclusion, and offering emotional support can help mitigate the negative psychological effects of excessive smartphone use. Additionally, involving family members in digital engagement can strengthen intergenerational bonds and reduce feelings of exclusion.

This study offers a foundation for further exploration and encourages future researchers to use larger, more diverse samples and longitudinal methods to better understand the evolving relationship between technology and well-being in older adults.

REFERENCES

Journal Articles

- Hausvik, G. I., Ropstad, O. K., & Pettersen, D. (2021). Smartphone usage among older adults. Computers in Human Behavior.
- Gökçearslan, Ş., Eşiyok, E., Griffiths, M. D., Doğan, M., & Turancı, E. (2023). Smartphone addiction among adults: The role of smartphone use, fear of missing out (FOMO), and self-efficacy among Turkish adults. Addicta: The Turkish Journal on Addictions.
- Elhai, J. D., Levine, J. C., Dvorak, R. D., & Hall, B. J. (2016). Fear of missing out, need for touch, anxiety and depression are related to problematic smartphone use. Computers in Human Behavior.
- Rozgonjuk, D., Elhai, J. D., Ryan, T., & Scott, G. G. (2019). Fear of missing out is associated with disrupted activities from receiving smartphone notifications and surface learning in college students. Computers & Education.
- Przybylski, A. K., Murayama, K., DeHaan, C. R., & Gladwell, V. (2013). Motivational, emotional, and behavioral correlates of fear of missing out. Computers in Human Behavior.
- Wolniewicz, C. A., Tiamiyu, M. F., Weeks, J. W., & Elhai, J. D. (2018). Problematic smartphone use and relations with negative affect, fear of missing out, and fear of negative and positive evaluation. Psychiatry Research.
- Balta, S., Emirtekin, E., Kircaburun, K., & Griffiths, M. D. (2020). Neuroticism, trait fear of missing out, and phubbing: The mediating role of state fear of missing out and problematic Instagram use. International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction.
- Liu, C., & Ma, J. (2020). Social support through online social networking sites and addiction among college students: The mediating roles of fear of missing out and problematic smartphone use. Current Psychology.

Books

- Turkle, S. (2011). Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other. Basic Books.
- Regehr, K. (2025). Smartphone Nation. University College London Press.
- Ling, R. (2012). Taken for Grantedness: The Embedding of Mobile Communication into Society. MIT Press.
- Vorderer, P., Hefner, D., Reinecke, L., & Klimmt, C. (2018). Digital games and well-being: The role of emotion regulation. In The Routledge Handbook of Media Use.