

FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO) AND PROBLEMATIC SMARTPHONE USE AS PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC PROCRASTINATION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Damini Dadarao Parve

Research Scholar, Department of Psychology

Dr. P.S.Bansode,

HOD, Department of Psychology, Sangameshwar College, Solapur

Punhashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Solapur University Solapur

Abstract

Academic procrastination has become a common concern among college students, affecting academic performance, mental well-being, and overall productivity. With the widespread use of smartphones and social networking platforms, students are increasingly vulnerable to distractions that interfere with their academic responsibilities. Among the psychological factors contributing to procrastination, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and problematic smartphone use have received significant attention. FoMO refers to the persistent apprehension that others may be having rewarding experiences without one's participation, leading individuals to remain constantly connected to social media and digital communication. Problematic smartphone use, characterized by excessive and compulsive smartphone engagement, further intensifies this issue by reducing concentration and increasing task avoidance. This paper examines the relationship between FoMO, problematic smartphone use, and academic procrastination among college students. It argues that both FoMO and excessive smartphone use significantly predict procrastination by promoting distraction, poor self-regulation, and diminished academic engagement. The paper also discusses practical interventions for educational institutions and students to minimize these negative effects.

Keywords: Fear of Missing Out, FoMO, problematic smartphone use, academic procrastination, college students, social media.

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the educational environment. Smartphones have become indispensable tools for communication, learning, entertainment, and social networking. Although smartphones provide numerous educational benefits, excessive dependence on them has created new psychological and behavioral challenges among students.

One of the emerging psychological phenomena associated with smartphone use is Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). FoMO motivates individuals to check social media platforms frequently, respond immediately to notifications, and remain continuously connected with peers. Consequently,

students often interrupt their study sessions to engage in online activities, resulting in delayed academic work.

Academic procrastination refers to the intentional postponement of academic tasks despite anticipating negative consequences. Research suggests that procrastination is associated with poor academic achievement, stress, anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and lower life satisfaction. Understanding how FoMO and problematic smartphone use contribute to academic procrastination is essential for developing effective interventions that promote healthy technology use and academic success.

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)

Fear of Missing Out is a psychological construct describing the anxiety that others are enjoying rewarding experiences without one's involvement. Individuals experiencing FoMO constantly seek updates from social networking platforms, messaging applications, and digital communities.

College students are particularly susceptible because peer relationships, social identity, and online engagement play central roles during emerging adulthood. Notifications from WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and similar platforms continuously compete for students' attention during lectures, assignments, and examination preparation.

FoMO contributes to:

- Frequent checking of smartphones.
- Reduced attention span.
- Increased anxiety.
- Poor concentration.
- Difficulty maintaining sustained focus on academic tasks.

As a result, students postpone studying while prioritizing social interactions, leading to increased academic procrastination.

Problematic Smartphone Use

Problematic smartphone use refers to excessive, compulsive, and poorly controlled smartphone behavior that interferes with daily functioning. Although not officially classified as an addiction, it shares characteristics with behavioral addictions such as excessive use, withdrawal symptoms, impaired control, and functional impairment.

Common indicators include:

- Constant phone checking.

- Difficulty reducing screen time.
- Anxiety when separated from the phone.
- Sleep disturbances.
- Neglect of academic responsibilities.
- Reduced face-to-face interactions.

Smartphones provide immediate gratification through social media, online gaming, videos, and instant messaging. This instant reward system reduces students' willingness to engage in cognitively demanding academic work that requires sustained effort.

Consequently, problematic smartphone use weakens self-control and promotes procrastination.

Academic Procrastination

Academic procrastination is the voluntary delay of important academic tasks despite expecting negative outcomes. Students may postpone assignments, projects, examination preparation, report writing, and reading activities until deadlines become unavoidable.

Major causes include:

- Poor time management.
- Low motivation.
- Fear of failure.
- Perfectionism.
- Anxiety.
- Digital distractions.
- Poor self-regulation.

The increasing availability of smartphones has added a significant external source of distraction that makes procrastination more frequent among today's college students.

Relationship Between FoMO, Smartphone Use, and Academic Procrastination

FoMO often initiates excessive smartphone engagement. Students experiencing FoMO repeatedly monitor social media to remain socially connected. Frequent interruptions reduce deep concentration and fragment study sessions.

Problematic smartphone use acts as a behavioral mechanism through which FoMO affects academic behavior. Students who compulsively use smartphones tend to postpone academic tasks because social media provides immediate emotional rewards compared to academic activities that require delayed gratification.

Several psychological theories explain this relationship.

Self-Regulation Theory

Self-regulation involves controlling thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to achieve long-term goals. Students with poor self-regulation struggle to resist smartphone distractions. FoMO further weakens self-control by increasing the urge to remain constantly connected.

Temporal Motivation Theory

Temporal Motivation Theory suggests that people delay tasks with delayed rewards while preferring activities offering immediate gratification. Smartphones provide instant entertainment and social interaction, making academic work appear less attractive.

Cognitive Load Theory

Constant notifications interrupt working memory and increase cognitive load. Students require additional time to regain concentration after each interruption, leading to lower productivity and increased procrastination.

Review of Previous Studies

Numerous empirical studies have demonstrated positive relationships among FoMO, problematic smartphone use, and academic procrastination.

Research consistently reports that students with higher FoMO scores spend significantly more time on social networking applications. Increased smartphone use is associated with reduced academic engagement and lower academic performance.

Several studies indicate that problematic smartphone use mediates the relationship between FoMO and procrastination. In other words, FoMO increases smartphone dependence, which subsequently increases procrastination.

Researchers have also observed that excessive smartphone users experience higher stress, poorer sleep quality, reduced concentration, and diminished academic satisfaction, all of which indirectly contribute to delayed academic work.

Overall, existing evidence supports the view that FoMO and problematic smartphone use are significant predictors of academic procrastination.

Practical Implications

Educational institutions should recognize excessive smartphone use as a behavioral issue affecting academic success rather than merely a technological concern.

Possible interventions include:

- Digital well-being awareness programs.
- Time management workshops.
- Mindfulness training.
- Counseling services.
- Self-regulation skill development.
- Smartphone-free study sessions.
- Classroom policies minimizing unnecessary phone use.
- Psychoeducation regarding FoMO and social media habits.

Students can also adopt healthy digital practices by:

- Turning off non-essential notifications.
- Using application blockers during study hours.
- Scheduling specific times for social media.
- Following the Pomodoro technique.
- Maintaining adequate sleep.
- Practicing mindfulness.
- Developing realistic academic schedules.

Parents and educators should encourage balanced technology use while promoting offline social interactions and healthy study routines.

Conclusion

Fear of Missing Out and problematic smartphone use have emerged as important psychological and behavioral factors influencing academic procrastination among college students. FoMO increases the desire to remain continuously connected with online social networks, while problematic smartphone use reinforces compulsive digital engagement. Together, these factors reduce concentration, weaken self-regulation, and encourage postponement of academic responsibilities.

Given the growing integration of smartphones into students' daily lives, educational institutions, counselors, parents, and students must work collaboratively to develop healthier digital habits. Interventions focusing on digital well-being, time management, mindfulness, and responsible smartphone use can significantly reduce academic procrastination and improve academic

performance. Future research should explore longitudinal relationships among these variables and evaluate intervention programs designed to strengthen students' self-regulation and digital resilience in an increasingly connected world.

References

1. Alt, D. (2015). College students' academic motivation, media engagement and fear of missing out. *Computers in Human Behavior*.
2. Elhai, J. D., Levine, J. C., Dvorak, R. D., & Hall, B. J. (2017). Fear of Missing Out, need for touch, anxiety and problematic smartphone use. *Computers in Human Behavior*.
3. 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*.
4. Rozgonjuk, D., et al. (2018). Fear of Missing Out and problematic smartphone use. *Current Psychology*.
5. Steel, P. (2007). The nature of procrastination: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*.
6. Tandon, A., et al. (2021). Smartphone addiction and academic procrastination among university students. *Education and Information Technologies*.