

Relationship Between the Fear of Missing Out and Loneliness Among Vietnamese University Students In COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Fear of missing out (FOMO) is a relatively new syndrome that has emerged in recent years due to the rapid development of social media platforms. It is becoming increasingly prevalent, particularly during the current COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of this study was to evaluate the relationship between fear of missing out and loneliness and predict loneliness by examining two degrees of fear of missing out in participants. 354 Vietnamese undergraduate students from three universities responded to the Fear of Missing Out questionnaire, with 349 of those responses being valid for study purposes. It was discovered through the study's findings that there is a positive association between loneliness and the fear of missing out (FOMO), with two components of FOMO, namely the personal and societal aspects, being predictive of loneliness. The outcomes of this study will have implications for our understanding of loneliness and the fear of missing out, as well as for the treatment of mental illnesses.

Keywords: fear of missing out, loneliness, mental illnesses, COVID-19, university students

INTRODUCTION

According to Przybylski et al. (2013), fear of missing out (FOMO) is a relatively recent phenomenon. The authors describe FOMO as a phenomenon marked by an intense want to stay connected to what others are doing and a widespread concern that others may have rewarding experiences while missing (Przybylski et al., 2013). According to Zang et al. (2020), fear of missing out is a psychological feeling, the dread that a person experiences when they miss out. In any context, an experience can either enhance or maintain an individual's self-concept, jeopardizing their psychological well-being. It is the fear of missing out on opportunities that others take advantage of; the result of one's comparison to others; the result of missing out on socializing with friends and important information, both offline and online (Riordan et al., 2015; Alt & Bonielnissim, 2018; Hayran & Anik, 2020; Hayran & Anik, 2021). Additionally, several research studies have shown a link between fear of missing out and loneliness when individuals have a high level of contact with social media (Alt, 2015; Barry et al., 2017; Blackwell et al., 2017). Individuals are increasingly prone to FOMO, particularly in the context of the covid-19 epidemic, because of the growing quantity of information available on social media (Hayran & Anik, 2021).

Numerous studies have shown an increased frequency and acceptability of grieving symptoms such as FOMO and loneliness among newly minted university students (Tarsha, 2016, Adams et al., 2017). These findings were anticipated, given the connection

between FOMO and the desire for relatedness (Przybylski et al., 2013) and the association between loneliness and the urge to belong (Berezan et al., 2020). Individuals who felt more lonely engaged in more FOMO. Additionally, Fumagalli et al. (2021) research indicates that the usage of social networking apps is linked with an increase in emotions of loneliness, which FOMO mediates (Fumagalli et al., 2021; Bonsaksen et al., 2021). This is consistent with the research of Song et al. (2021), which found a positive correlation between people's worry and boredom caused by the epidemic and their FOMO (Song et al., 2021).

According to Fumagalli et al. (2021), the results suggest that the fear of missing out has also been linked to higher levels of loneliness. These findings imply that although technology may help mitigate the

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impacts of loneliness associated with social isolation, it is vital to encourage messaging and VoIP apps rather than network applications since they reduce loneliness without raising FOMO (Fumagalli et al., 2021; Bonsaksen, 2021). These findings were consistent with those of Bernard (2020), loneliness was positively correlated with FOMO and found to have a strong path coefficient ($\beta = 0.455$). The model predicted that when the loneliness scale increased by one unit, the FoMO scale increased by 0.455 units (Bernard, 2020).

Currently, problems around fear of missing out are extensively researched across the globe. However, there is no study in Vietnam. As a result, we decided to research the relationship between the two dimensions of FOMO and loneliness among students during the Covid 19 pandemic. This will serve as the foundation for future research on this subject.

METHOD

Hypothesis

This study used a cross-sectional study to investigate predictors of loneliness among university students in the COVID-19 pandemic context.

H01: There will be no statistically significant relationship between fear of missing out (FOMO) and loneliness.

H02: There will be no significant prediction of

loneliness by personal FOMO and social FOMO.

Participants

Three hundred forty-nine university students participated in this prospective study from July 2021 and August 2021. The survey instrument was distributed through an online survey application. The data distribution was done through Google Form, an application developed by Google Inc. The sample size demanded linear regression analysis was calculated in line with the recommendations of Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) and Hair et al. (2009). A total of 354 university students (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) from three universities in Vietnam participated in the study, with 354 questionnaires returned with a return rate of 100%, which had exceeded the 30% response rate most researchers require for analysis (Dillman, 2000). Most participants were female ($n=291$; 83.4%); did not participate in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic ($n=239$, 68.5%) and rarely used social networks ($n=233$; 66.8%). Among the participants, 79.7% ($n=278$) were in a normal state, 16.3% ($n= 57$) were in a self-quarantine state and 4% were in a concentrated Isolation state. 92.4% ($n=324$) lived with their family, 12.8% ($n=14$) lived with their friends, 4.0% ($n=11$) lived alone, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of samples

	Category	<i>n</i>	percent
Gender	Male	58	16.6
	Female	291	83.4
University	Ho Chi Minh City University of Education	91	26.1
	Dong A University	182	52.1
	Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology	76	21.8
Academic year	Freshmen	220	63
	Sophomore	31	8.9
	Junior	59	16.9
	Senior	39	11.2
Join the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic	Yes	110	31.5
	No	239	68.5
Current living status	Family	324	92.8
	Friend	14	4.0
	Alone	11	3.2
Current situation status	Concentrated isolation	14	4
	Self-quarantine	57	16.3
	Normal	278	79.7
Level of social networks usage	Rarely	233	66.8
	Sometimes	116	33.2

UCLA Loneliness Scale was developed by Russell et al. (1996), which assessed loneliness. The UCLA-Scale consists of 20 items. Participants answer on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Likert, 1932). The instrument was translated and back-translated for the Vietnamese sample by separate groups of bilingual people working in psychology. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate reliability in this research, and the values obtained for the UCLA scale were 0.81.

Procedure

Multi-regression analysis was performed in this research. Subsequently, the two dimensions of fear of missing out were regressed to stay mean scores to identify which one accounted for the most variance. The model was applied to personal FOMO and social FOMO.

$$Y = b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \text{Constant} \quad (1).$$

Y = Loneliness,

X1 = personal FOMO

X2 = social FOMO

The symbols b1 and b2 are the respective regression coefficients (beta).

Data analysis

The data were statistically analyzed for Social Sciences version 20.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA, 2010) for Windows operating system, with a significance level of 5% for statistical decision criteria. This study tested for normal data distribution based on the skewness and kurtosis proposed by D'agostino et al. (1990). A Pearson correlation analysis was computed to assess the connection between the fear of missing out and the loneliness of university students.

Multiple linear regression analysis examined the

relationship between the predictor variable (personal aspect and social aspect of fear of missing out) and the dependent variable. In this step, minimum levels of significance of the univariate models were used to pre-select factors (independent variables) to be used in a multiple linear regression at a level of 20% significance ($p \leq .200$) (Hair et al., 2009). The coefficients obtained were then compared to the estimates reached by the multiple models, seeking to identify behaviors that reveal potential mediating or moderating variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The DW criterion is usually used in regression to study the randomness of the regression residues. The DW value converges to zero if there is a strong correlation between the successive points. If there is a weak correlation between the successive points, i.e. a random distribution, the DW value converges to 2.0. For $n > 100$, the distribution is random with a 95% confidence interval, if DW is between 1.7 and 2.3 (Durbin & Watson, 1950). Multicollinearity was evaluated by the analysis of the tolerance value and its inverse, the variance inflation factor, where a commonly used reference value is a tolerance of .10, which corresponds to a VIF above 10 ($VIF \leq 10$ implies controlled collinearity) (Abbad & Torres, 2002; Field, 2009).

RESULTS

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the linear relationship between fear of missing out and loneliness. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r(347) = .413$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the results suggested that the first hypothesis (H01) was rejected. The result is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation between the fear of missing out (FOMO) and loneliness (UCLA)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>UCLA</i>	<i>FOMO</i>
UCLA	-	.413**
FOMO	.413**	-

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

*. Note: UCLA, UCLA Loneliness scale; FOMO, FOMO scale

The results in Table 3 showed that the Sig value of the F-test was 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the linear regression model was suitable for the whole. A

significant regression equation was found $F(2, 346) = 35.533$; $p < 0.05$.

Table 3. One-way ANOVA results for the regression model's hypothesis of fit.

<i>Model</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	
1	Regression	13.911	2	6.955	35.533	<.001b
	Residual	67.728	346	.196		
	Total	81.639	348			

As shown in Table 4, the corrected coefficient Adjusted R square was 0.166 indicating almost 16.6% variation in the dependent variable (loneliness) due to a one-unit change in independent variables.

Table 4. Results of The Regression Model

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>	<i>Durbin-Watson</i>
1	.413a	.170	.166	.44243	1.799

The Durbin-Watson (DW) statistic was used to examine auto-correlation between independent variables, 1.799, indicating no significant correlations between the residuals (Durbin & Watson, 1950).

Therefore, the assumption was satisfied, and the regression analysis was conducted.

Table 5. Regression Coefficients

<i>Model</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Collinearity Statistics</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>			<i>Tolerance</i>	<i>VIF</i>
(Constant)	2.160	.121		17.816	<.001		
1 personal FOMO	.184	.047	.248	3.881	<.001	.589	1.698
social FOMO	.122	.037	.208	3.255	.001	.589	1.698

Both personal_FOMO and social FOMO were significant predictors of loneliness. Therefore, the second hypothesis (H02) was rejected. Besides, the VIF coefficient was 1.698 and less than 10, so no multiline phenomenon occurred, as shown in table 5. The official regression equation is:

$$Y = 0.248 * \text{personal_FOMO} + 0.208 * \text{social_FOMO} \quad (2)$$

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the association between fear of missing out and loneliness and predict loneliness by using two dimensions of fear of missing out. While the personal focus dimension of FOMO entails a desire to satisfy internal needs such as pleasure and happiness, as indicated by indicators such as disconnection, falling behind, not experiencing, regret, and others, the social focus dimension of FOMO entails a fear of missing social events or activities desired by social needs, as indicated by indicators such as social exclusion, loneliness, social group, and social fit, among others. Our findings revealed a substantial positive relationship between loneliness and the fear of missing out. Personal FOMO, on the other hand, is a stronger predictor of loneliness than social FOMO. These results agreed with those of Fumagalli et al. (2021). They discovered that fear of missing out is associated with increased degrees of loneliness (Fumagalli et al., 2021; Barry & Wong, 2020). Fumagalli et al. (2021), for example, interpret the relationship as follows: Social media app use was associated with increased feelings of loneliness, and this relationship was modulated by fear of missing out (Fumagalli et al., 2021; Bonsaksen et al., 2021). FOMO was shown to be a predictor of loneliness by Barry & Wong (2020), and this relationship persisted for both teens and adults and FOMO with close friends

and family members (Barry & Wong, 2020). Our study also discovered that two dimensions of FOMO, namely the personal and societal aspects, predict loneliness. This is a brand-new topic in our study.

The sample, literature, and self-reported measurements were the main research limitations. Even if it was large, the samples for this current study came from only four specific universities in Vietnam, which may not be sufficient to represent the entire higher education institutions in Vietnam and socio-cultural influences from different parts of Vietnam. This research was also cross-sectional, with a weak model. Future studies should address these limitations, and the fear of missing out for college students should be investigated further.

CONCLUSION

Our findings revealed a substantial positive relationship between loneliness and the fear of missing out. Furthermore, the study also discovered that two dimensions of FOMO, namely the personal and societal aspects, predict loneliness. This is a new issue in our study. The findings of this study will have implications for explaining psychological phenomena that contribute to the treatment of mental illnesses.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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