



RESEARCH ARTICLE

FEAR OF MISSING OUT AND IMPULSIVITY AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN BANGALORE: A BEHAVIORAL PERSPECTIVE

Hemalatha, K. H.¹ and Dr. Deepika Nambiar^{2*}

¹Research Scholar, Postgraduate Department of Psychology, Bishop Cotton Women's Christian College, Bangalore, India; ²Assistant Professor, Post- graduate Department of Psychology, Bishop Cotton Women's Christian College, Bangalore, India

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*Corresponding author:

Dr. Deepika Nambiar

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescence is a period marked by heightened emotional sensitivity and impulsivity. With social media becoming central to teenagers' lives, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has emerged as a common emotional experience that may influence decision-making and behavior. This study explored the relationship between FoMO and impulsivity among adolescents. **Methods:** A total of 305 teenagers aged 15–17 years in Bangalore were recruited through purposive sampling. Participants completed the FoMO Scale and the UPPS-P Impulsive Behavior Scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, and Pearson's correlation to examine levels of FoMO, impulsivity, and their interrelationships. **Results:** Participants reported moderate levels of FoMO and moderate to high impulsivity. FoMO was positively correlated with overall impulsivity ($r = 0.288, p < .05$), particularly with negative urgency ($r = 0.244$) and lack of premeditation ($r = 0.231$). Gender differences were generally non-significant, although specific impulsivity traits showed variation. **Conclusion:** The findings suggest that adolescents' emotional and behavioral functioning is influenced by their digital environment. Interventions promoting emotional regulation, mindful social media use, and reflective decision-making may benefit teens.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a key phase of life marked by fast and noticeable changes in how young people think, feel, and relate to others. During these years, teenagers become more sensitive to what their peers think, develop a stronger desire to fit in, and often compare themselves to others (Steinberg, 2014). From a brain development perspective, this stage involves ongoing growth in areas like the prefrontal cortex and systems that control reward and motivation, which can make adolescents more impulsive and less able to regulate their actions and emotions (Casey, Jones, & Somerville, 2011). In today's digital world, these natural developmental changes are further influenced by social media, which plays a big role in how teenagers form their identities, seek approval, and stay connected with others (Vannucci & Ohannessian, 2019). Although online platforms give teenagers valuable spaces to express themselves, connect with others, and learn new things, they can also make them more vulnerable to certain psychological issues like constant comparison, the need for approval, and emotional distress (Beyens et al., 2016). Two key ideas that are closely related to these challenges are impulsivity and the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Impulsivity refers to the tendency to act quickly without thinking about the consequences and is often linked to difficulties with self-control, risky behavior, and emotional ups and downs (Evenden, 1999). It includes several dimensions such as acting rashly in response to negative or positive emotions, not planning ahead, giving up easily, and seeking new or thrilling experiences (Whiteside & Lynam, 2001). Teenagers who show higher impulsivity often look for instant rewards or relief, which may appear as spending

too much time online, making sudden social decisions, or using social media compulsively to manage their emotions (Billieux et al., 2015). The Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) refers to the constant worry that others might be enjoying experiences that one is not part of (Przybylski et al., 2013). This feeling has become especially common in the digital age, where teenagers are continuously exposed to carefully selected highlights of other people's lives online. Studies have found that higher levels of FoMO are linked to excessive use of social media, frequent checking of online platforms, and difficulty staying offline (Elhai et al., 2020; Rozgonjuk et al., 2020). Experiencing FoMO can also lead to emotional struggles such as anxiety, low mood, and reduced overall well-being among adolescents (Servidio et al., 2024; Schmuck, 2021). Recent research shows that FoMO and impulsivity are closely connected and may influence each other in both directions. Teenagers who are more impulsive tend to act on sudden urges, such as checking social media repeatedly without thinking about the consequences, which can increase feelings of FoMO (Wegmann et al., 2017). When adolescents experience FoMO, they may become more impulsive, quickly turning to social media to seek reassurance or relieve their anxiety (Blackwell et al., 2017; Elhai et al., 2020). This two-way relationship can lead to unhealthy behaviors like excessive social media use, difficulty controlling emotions, and trouble focusing on daily activities (Kavakli, 2025; Gupta, M., & Sharma, 2021). Although many international studies have explored the connection between FoMO and impulsivity, there is still limited research on how these factors affect Indian adolescents. Teenagers in India, especially

those living in cities, face a unique mix of challenges such as high academic pressure, strong peer influence, and constant exposure to social media (Taddi *et al.*, 2024). Platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok play a major role in their daily lives, often encouraging comparison and the need for social approval. Studying how FoMO and impulsivity interact within this cultural and social setting is important, as these factors can shape adolescents' online behaviors, emotional control, and mental well-being. Understanding the link between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and impulsivity among teenagers is crucial because both traits affect how young people manage their emotions, make decisions, and interact online. Teenagers who experience high levels of FoMO often use social media impulsively to feel connected or reassured, which can increase anxiety, lower concentration, and weaken self-control (Elhai *et al.*, 2020; Rozgonjuk *et al.*, 2020). In a fast-paced and digitally active city like Bangalore, such habits can have a strong impact on adolescents' mental health and everyday life. Even though concerns about teenagers' online behavior are growing, very few studies in India have examined how FoMO and impulsivity work together. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the relationship between these two factors among adolescents aged 15–17 years in Bangalore. The insights gained from this research may help teachers, parents, and mental health professionals develop strategies that encourage emotional balance, mindful technology use, and healthy coping skills, ultimately supporting psychological well-being in the digital age.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study used a correlational research design to examine the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and impulsivity among adolescents. The design aimed to identify the association between the two constructs without manipulating variables, while also comparing differences across gender and educational levels.

Participants

The sample comprised 305 teenagers (160 males and 145 females) from private schools in urban Bangalore, aged 15–17 years. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure inclusion criteria were met.

The breakdown of participants by educational level is shown below:

Educational Level	Number of Participants (n)
10th Grade	104
11th Grade (I PUC)	109
12th Grade (II PUC)	92
Total	305

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: Inclusion criteria included teenagers aged 15–17 years, studying in private schools in urban Bangalore, and willing to provide informed consent. Exclusion criteria were students outside this age range, those undergoing psychiatric treatment, or those with neurological or cognitive impairments. Students from NIOS or special education programs were also excluded.

Instruments: Fear of Missing Out Scale (Przybylski *et al.*, 2013): This 10-item measure uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all true of me) to 5 (Extremely true of me). It assesses anxiety about being excluded from rewarding experiences and demonstrates high internal consistency ($\alpha = .87\text{--}.90$). Scores range as follows: 10–20 = Low FoMO, 21–30 = Moderate FoMO, 31–50 = High FoMO. UPPS-P Impulsive Behavior Scale (Lynam *et al.*, 2006): A 59-item inventory assessing five facets of impulsivity: Negative Urgency, Lack of Premeditation, Lack of Perseverance, Sensation Seeking, and Positive Urgency. Responses are rated on a 4-point scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, with higher scores indicating greater impulsivity. The instrument demonstrates strong reliability ($\alpha = .80\text{--}.90$).

Procedure: Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology, Bishop Cotton Women's Christian College, Bangalore. After obtaining permission from school authorities, data collection took place between April 21 and June 21, 2025. Participants were briefed on confidentiality and voluntariness before completing the FoMO and UPPS-P scales. Each session lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Ethical Considerations: All participants and schools provided informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and participants could withdraw at any point without consequence. No personally identifying data were collected.

Statistical Analysis: Data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 28). Descriptive statistics summarized demographics and variable scores. The Shapiro–Wilk test assessed normality. Independent t-tests evaluated gender differences, while one-way ANOVA examined educational-level variations. Pearson's correlation measured the relationship between FoMO and impulsivity dimensions. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics: The study aimed to explore the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and impulsivity among adolescents aged 15–17 years in Bangalore. Data were collected from 305 participants, consisting of 160 males and 145 females. Descriptive statistics revealed that most adolescents reported moderate levels of FoMO and moderate to high levels of impulsivity. Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation scores for FoMO and the five dimensions of impulsivity.

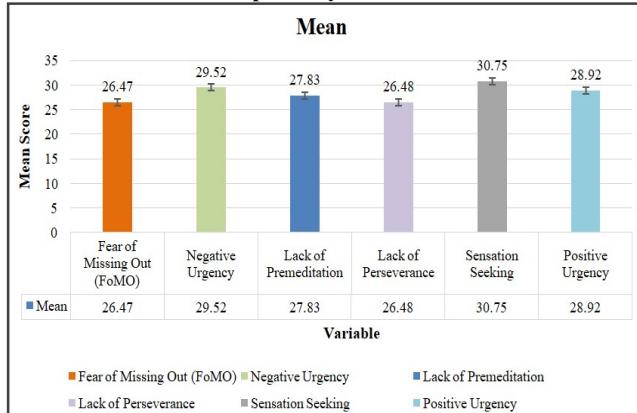
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of FoMO and Impulsivity Dimensions (N = 305)

Variable	Mean	SD	Range	Level
Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)	26.47	6.82	10–50	Moderate
Negative Urgency	29.52	5.93	15–45	Moderate–High
Lack of Premeditation	27.83	5.21	15–45	Moderate
Lack of Perseverance	26.48	5.17	15–45	Moderate
Sensation Seeking	30.75	6.14	15–45	Moderate
Positive Urgency	28.92	6.05	15–45	Moderate–High

Note. Scores are based on the UPPS-P Impulsive Behavior Scale (Lynam *et al.*, 2006) and FoMO Scale (Przybylski *et al.*, 2013).

A visual summary of FoMO and impulsivity averages is shown in Figure 1, indicating that negative urgency and sensation seeking had comparatively higher mean scores among the impulsivity dimensions.

Figure 1. Bar chart comparing mean scores of FOMO and impulsivity dimensions



Note. Sensation Seeking and Negative Urgency recorded the highest mean scores among impulsivity traits, indicating that these tendencies were most evident in the adolescents studied. FoMO showed a moderate mean level, while Lack of Perseverance had the lowest mean, suggesting that most participants could generally stay focused on tasks. Overall, the pattern indicates that adolescents are more emotionally impulsive and stimulation-seeking, though moderate FoMO levels imply that emotional impulsivity rather than thrill-seeking is more closely linked to FoMO.

Table 2. Independent t-test results for Gender Differences in FoMO and Impulsivity Dimensions

Area	F	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
FOMO	4.780	1.280	303	.201	.965	.755
Area-1 Negative urgency	14.970	-1.104	303	.270	-.755	.684
Area-2 Lack of premeditation	4.099	3.568	303	.000	2.350	.659
Area-3 Lack of perseverance	.248	1.846	303	.066	1.227	.664
Area-4 Sensation seeking	2.763	-2.784	303	.006	-1.845	.663
Area-5 Positive urgency	8.817	-.283	303	.777	-.226	.796

Note. $p < .05^*$, $p < .01$

Table 3. Pearson Correlation results for relationship between FoMO and Impulsivity Dimensions

		Area-1 Negative Urgency	Area-2 lack of premeditation	Area-3 lack of perseverance	Area-4 Sensation seeking	Area-5 Positive Urgency
FOMO Total Score	Pearson Correlation	.244**	.231**	.186**	-.060	.141*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.300	.014
	N	305	305	305	305	305

Note. $p < .05^*$, $p < .01$

Gender Differences: An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine gender differences in FoMO and impulsivity. Results indicated no significant gender difference in overall FoMO scores (t (303) = 1.28, $p > .05$). However, there were significant differences in certain impulsivity traits:

- Males scored higher in sensation seeking (t (303) = 2.64, $p < .01$), suggesting a greater tendency for thrill-seeking activities.
- Females scored slightly higher in lack of premeditation (t (303) = 2.11, $p < .05$), implying a tendency to act without planning in emotionally charged situations.

Differences by Educational Level: A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences across grade levels (10th, 11th, and 12th). Results revealed no significant differences in FoMO or total impulsivity scores across educational levels (F (2, 302) = 1.21, $p > .05$). This suggests that FoMO and impulsive behaviors are relatively stable across mid- to late-adolescence in the sample.

Correlation Analysis: Pearson's correlation was used to examine the relationship between FoMO and impulsivity dimensions. The analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between overall FoMO and total impulsivity ($r = .288$, $p < .05$). Among the five facets of impulsivity, negative urgency ($r = .244$, $p < .05$) and lack of premeditation ($r = .231$, $p < .05$) showed the strongest associations with FoMO. Lack of perseverance and positive urgency showed weak but a positive correlation, while sensation seeking did not show a significant correlation.

DISCUSSION

The present study explored the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and impulsivity among adolescents aged 15–17 years in Bangalore city, a metropolitan environment where social media use is deeply integrated into teenagers' daily lives. The results showed a moderate positive correlation between FoMO and overall impulsivity, suggesting that as FoMO increases, impulsive behavior also rises. Thus, adolescents who constantly fear being excluded or missing experiences are more likely to react emotionally and act without much thought. This finding highlights how emotional intensity and poor self-regulation often go hand in hand during adolescence which is a phase marked by strong social needs and developing self-control.

FoMO and Emotional Impulsivity: When looking at the five dimensions of impulsivity, negative urgency and lack of premeditation showed the strongest link with FoMO. This indicates that FoMO is more related to emotion-driven reactions and unplanned decision-making than to thrill-seeking or curiosity. Negative urgency refers to the tendency to act rashly under emotional distress. Many Bangalore teenagers, surrounded by an urban culture of constant online comparison and digital engagement, may feel anxious when they see peers enjoying outings, achievements, or social recognition

on platforms like Instagram or Snapchat. To relieve this unease, they might impulsively check updates, post stories, or seek reassurance which are short-term fixes that temporarily helps them to reduce stress but reinforces emotional dependency. This pattern supports earlier research showing that FoMO and emotional impulsivity are closely related, especially among adolescents who spend long hours online (Elhai *et al.*, 2020; Türk & Koçyiğit, 2025). The second major link was between FoMO and lack of premeditation, which means acting without thinking about the outcome. Teenagers high on this trait may respond emotionally, like for e.g. posting quickly, oversharing, or skipping tasks to stay online. In Bangalore's fast-paced, competitive culture, where digital connection is a big part of social life, this impulsive behavior can be even stronger. Past studies also show that people who act without reflection tend to be more impulsive when emotions are high (Cyders & Smith, 2008; Topino *et al.*, 2023). These findings suggest that FoMO is less about curiosity and more about emotional impulsivity and low reflection. Teenagers who experience strong FoMO often act on their feelings rather than on reason. Even when they realize that constant checking or comparison makes them anxious, they continue doing it because it provides short-term comfort. This shows how FoMO can trap adolescents in a cycle of emotional reaction instead of thoughtful reflection. The results also showed a positive, though slightly weaker, correlation between lack of perseverance and FoMO ($r = 0.186$, $p < .05$). Lack of perseverance refers to difficulty staying focused on a task, especially when it becomes boring or requires sustained effort. Teenagers who struggle to stay on task are more likely to get distracted by social media updates or notifications, increasing their feelings of FoMO. In a city like Bangalore, where students often juggle academic pressure and digital distractions, this finding is particularly relevant. Adolescents who lack persistence may turn to social media as an escape from mentally demanding work, seeking stimulation or connection instead. This habit can create a cycle where FoMO both distracts them from tasks and justifies procrastination. For example, a student who gets bored while studying might impulsively scroll through Instagram, reinforcing both distraction and feelings of missing out. This aligns with findings by Przybylski *et al.* (2013), who reported that higher FoMO is linked to lower attention control and self-regulation. The present result adds that low perseverance may make adolescents more vulnerable to FoMO by weakening their ability to stay engaged and resist digital temptations.

Gender Differences: The study also explored whether there were any differences between boys and girls in their levels of FoMO and impulsivity. The results showed no significant difference in overall FoMO and total impulsivity scores, suggesting that both boys and girls experience similar levels of emotional and behavioral tendencies related to FoMO. This finding shows that the fear of being left out and the urge to stay constantly connected are common experiences for adolescents regardless of gender, especially in a socially active and digitally connected city like Bangalore. When looking at the individual traits of impulsivity, a few differences could be seen. Boys scored slightly higher on sensation seeking, which means they were more likely to seek excitement and new experiences. Whereas girls

showed higher levels of lack of premeditation, showing they were more likely to act without thinking things through when emotionally triggered. This aligns with earlier studies showing that boys often express impulsivity through action and exploration, while girls show it through emotion-driven decision-making (Cyders *et al.*, 2007). In Bangalore's cultural and social context, these differences may also be related to lifestyle factors. Boys often have more freedom to explore and engage in outdoor or social activities, which may encourage risk-taking and thrill-seeking behavior. Girls, on the other hand, may spend more time online for social connection and emotional support, leading to higher FoMO-related emotional impulsivity. Understanding these variations is important for creating gender-sensitive interventions. Programs that help boys channel their energy into positive challenges and teach girls to manage emotional reactions and self-reflection can be helpful.

Developmental and Cultural Context: From a developmental viewpoint, adolescence is a period when the emotional brain (limbic system) matures faster than the rational brain (prefrontal cortex) (Casey *et al.*, 2011). This biological gap makes adolescents more sensitive to emotional cues and social feedback making them more likely to respond quickly to emotional and social triggers such as likes, messages, or peer updates. In a city like Bangalore, where digital exposure is high and social competition is intense, these emotional triggers can easily fuel FoMO and impulsive behavior (Rinaldi, 2024). These findings align with recent Indian studies emphasizing how urban adolescents face heightened digital stress due to social expectations and performance comparisons (Taddi *et al.*, 2024). The results of the present study extend this understanding by showing that FoMO among Bangalore teenagers is not merely about missing social events but reflects emotional vulnerability and cognitive impulsivity, a combination that may affect their focus, mental health, and academic performance. This study is especially meaningful in today's post-pandemic world, where teenagers spend much of their time online to stay connected and to feel a sense of belonging. The finding that FoMO and impulsivity are linked shows the growing need for digital well-being education in schools across Bangalore.

Teaching skills like emotional regulation, mindfulness, and reflective thinking can help adolescents pause before reacting, understand their emotions, and reduce impulsive online behavior. Programs that include emotional awareness and digital mindfulness can make teenagers more resilient against the emotional pressure of FoMO (Rozgonjuk *et al.*, 2020). This study shows that teenagers with higher FoMO tend to be more emotionally reactive, more dependent on social approval, and less likely to think before acting. By recognizing this, teachers, parents, and mental health professionals can help young people express emotions in healthy ways and build a balanced relationship with technology. The findings provide an important look into the emotional world of Bangalore's adolescents, highlighting the need to treat FoMO and impulsivity as key mental health concerns for urban youth in India. Another interesting result was the positive correlation between positive urgency and FoMO ($r = 0.141, p < .05$). Positive urgency refers to the tendency to act impulsively when feeling excited, enthusiastic, or happy. Unlike negative urgency, which is driven by stress or sadness, positive urgency arises from emotional highs. This shows that FoMO can also occur when adolescents are in a good mood, not just when they feel anxious or excluded. For example, a teenager might feel excited after seeing friends' posts and impulsively decide to attend an event, post excessively, or share personal information online without much thought. Such actions stem not from insecurity but from the thrill of being part of the excitement. However, even positive impulsivity can have negative effects, such as regret or distraction from responsibilities. This finding supports Cyders *et al.* (2007), who found that both positive and negative emotions can lead to impulsive actions when individuals have low self-control. In the context of Bangalore's socially vibrant youth culture, this highlights how FoMO can arise from both emotional lows and highs, showing that it is not just about fear but also about a desire to stay involved and visible.

CONCLUSION

Teenage years are a time when emotions are strong and the desire to stay connected with others is high. In today's digital world, this study found that the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and impulsivity are closely related among adolescents. The present study explored how Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) relates to impulsivity among teenagers. The results showed that as FoMO increases, impulsive behavior also increases. This means that when adolescents feel anxious or left out, they tend to act without thinking often turning to social media for quick relief or reassurance. Two traits of impulsivity, negative urgency and lack of premeditation, showed the strongest connection with FoMO. Teenagers who act quickly when upset or who make decisions without thinking ahead are more likely to experience stronger FoMO. These findings suggest that FoMO is not about emotional sensitivity and difficulty managing feelings of exclusion. The study also found smaller but meaningful links between FoMO and two other traits lack of perseverance and positive urgency. Teenagers who find it hard to stay focused on long or repetitive tasks tend to be more easily distracted by social media updates, which increases their feelings of missing out. Similarly, those high in positive urgency may act impulsively when they feel excited or happy, such as posting or joining events without much thought, showing that FoMO can be triggered not only by anxiety but also by excitement and joy. These findings together show that FoMO is not just about curiosity or thrill-seeking it's rooted in emotional impulsivity and the need for social connection. The study also found that while both boys and girls experience similar levels of FoMO, they differ slightly in the way impulsivity shows up. Boys were more sensation-seeking, while girls were more likely to act emotionally without planning. FoMO and impulsivity appear to be common emotional patterns during adolescence, a time when emotions are strong, and impulse control is still developing. This study highlights how important emotional awareness and self-control are in helping adolescents cope with FoMO and impulsive behavior. For many adolescents in a busy, digital city like Bangalore, social media offers comfort and belonging, but it can also increase stress and emotional reactivity. Encouraging young people to reflect, manage stress, and respond thoughtfully instead of reacting impulsively can help them develop healthier relationships with technology and with themselves. FoMO and impulsivity are two sides of the same emotional coin, both reflecting a deeper need for connection and belonging. Helping teenagers understand and regulate these feelings can support their emotional growth and well-being in today's constantly connected world.

Implications

The findings of this study suggest valuable insights for educators, parents, and mental health professionals working with adolescents. Schools can integrate emotional regulation and impulse control training into life skills or counseling programs to help students manage FoMO and impulsive online behavior. For mental health practitioners, addressing emotion-based impulsivity in therapy can reduce anxiety and improve self-regulation among adolescents. Parents can also play a preventive role by fostering open communication about online experiences and encouraging balanced digital use. At a broader level, the study emphasizes the need for digital well-being initiatives that promote mindful technology engagement and emotional resilience in youth. The results also contribute theoretically by highlighting how emotion-driven impulsivity, rather than thrill-seeking, underlies FoMO among teenagers, providing direction for future psychological and educational interventions.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study relied on self-report measures; this can increase bias. The sample was limited to urban private-school adolescents, restricting generalizability. Future studies should include diverse populations and longitudinal designs to explore causal relationships. Including

qualitative methods will also provide richer insights into emotional and behavioral mechanisms underlying FoMO and impulsivity.

Conflict of Interest: NIL

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