Effect of FOMO on teenagers' mental health

Farah Hakimah Fauzi[1], Anu Suria Ganason[2]

[1]Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 71800 Bandar Baru Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, [2]Family Medicine Unit, Department of Primary Health Care, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 71800 Bandar Baru Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The rapid advancement of technology and widespread social media usage have contributed to a significant rise in mental health issues globally, particularly among adolescents. In Malaysia, depression prevalence has doubled since 2019, with teenagers aged 16-19 being major contributors (34.7%) to mental health disorders. Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), characterized by persistent apprehension of being excluded from rewarding social experiences, has emerged as a key psychological factor linked to this trend, with 60% of users reported to experience FoMO. **Materials and Methods:** This literature review utilized databases including NCBI, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and PubMed, covering publications from 2019 to 2025. Keywords used were FoMO, mental health, teenagers, anxiety, depression, social media, and digital addiction. Twenty articles were identified through keyword searches, with additional references found within reviewed articles. A qualitative methodology was employed to understand the relationship between social media usage patterns and emotional well-being among adolescents. **Results:** Studies consistently demonstrate strong positive correlations between the time spent on social media and the experience of FoMO. Social media platforms utilize features like real-time notifications, streaks, and disappearing content that create cycles of anxiety about missing out. FoMO manifests as cognitive distortions, behavioural compulsions, and potential digital addiction, leading to heightened stress, anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and academic performance decline. Effective interventions include Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), digital detox programs, mindfulness practices, and limiting daily social media use to 30-60 minutes. **Conclusion:** FoMO significantly impacts teenagers' mental health through excessive social media engagement. The constant connectivity can create feelings of inadequacy, foster social comparison, and lead to disconnection from real-life interactions. Preventive strategies including CBT, mindfulness meditation, and structured social media limitations show promising results in reducing FoMO-induced mental health issues. Greater awareness and targeted interventions are essential to support vulnerable adolescent populations in developing healthier digital habits.

Keywords: FOMO, mental health, social media, teenagers, digital addiction