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# The 50-most cited articles on ‘fear of missing out’ (FOMO): A citation analysis

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**Abstract.** *Background:* Fear of missing out (FOMO) concerns the apprehensiveness individuals experience regarding not being a part of positive experiences that other people might be having. Within the last decade, there has been a plethora of research on FOMO but understanding its impact and trends is lacking. *Method:* We conducted a title-specific search and retrieved data from Google Scholar using the key terms ‘fear of missing out’ and ‘FOMO’ to determine the 50 most cited articles. Data from these articles was manually extracted and analyzed. *Results:* The top-50 cited were cited between 69 to 2497 times (mean=265.86, SD ± 375.55). The citation count of nine articles was over 400 times, in which all articles used quantitative research designs. Among the top 50 articles, 49 articles were original studies apart from one review article. These articles on FOMO were published from 2013 to 2021, with the period from 2016 to 2018 (n=31) being the most prolific. These studies were authored by 169 researchers, of which 15 authors contributed at least two articles. Regarding the affiliations, 40 institutions and 18 countries with the University of Toledo and the USA being the highest contributors. Finally, these articles were published in 34 journals. *Conclusion:* The current study presents a comprehensive list of the top-cited articles on FOMO. This analysis provides useful insights about FOMO regarding understanding the classic literature and research trends. Moreover, this study may help identify future directions in this area.

**Keywords:** FOMO, Review, Retrospective Citation Analysis, India.

## **Introduction**

In 2004, a Harvard Business School student penned down a light-hearted article cum anecdote in his college magazine about how students were leading confused social lives and suffering from peculiar conditions. He called these situations as ‘fear of missing out (FOMO) and ‘fear of better option’ (FOBO) (McGinnis, 2004). The concepts, at least one of them struck a chord with society, as the term FOMO quickly caught up in the digital parlance (Reagle, 2014). A social media analysis showed that around 200 posts tagged with #FOMO reached over 100,000 views in a single day (Hayran et al., 2020). However, it was almost a decade later when it piqued the interest of academicians and scholars when Przybylski et al., (2013) in their seminar article defined FOMO as a “pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent” (Przybylski et al., 2013). Consequently, it entered the Oxford English dictionary around the same time (Hayran et al., 2020).

## **Literature Review**

### **Corelates of Fear of Missing out**

Those who fear missing out might find social media a coping device. However, research shows that FOMO can be both, a trigger and a consequence of compulsive social media use (i.e unregulated social media use that leads to negative consequences) (Baker et al., 2016; Fioravanti et al., 2021). It is also linked with several maladaptive behaviors including academic misconduct such as classroom incivility (using social media applications during class room lectures), cheating, and engaging in plagiarism (McKee et al., 2022) and phubbing i.e. using a smartphone and ignoring others around oneself during interpersonal communication (Fang et al., 2020). Mental health concerns related to FOMO are poor sleep (Adams et al., 2020; Milyavskaya et al., 2018) depression (Baker et al., 2016; Dhir et al., 2018; Fioravanti et al., 2021), stress (Milyavskaya et al., 2018) and anxiety (Dhir et al., 2018; Fioravanti et al., 2021). Higher level of FOMO is also correlated to various substance use issues including binge drinking, lower age of initiating drinking, and use of illicit substances such as cannabis, depressants, hallucinogens, and stimulants (Brunborg et al., 2022; McKee et al., 2022).

### **Incidence of Fear of Missing out**

Though, there is a lacuna of research establishing prevalence of FOMO, a few exploratory studies point out the pervasiveness of FOMO. A survey of students (n =147) found the incidence of FOMO to be 59.2% in males and 40.08% in females (Qutishat & Abu Sharour, 2019). Another study assessing ‘in-the-moment experiences’ of FOMO found that their sample experienced FOMO frequently, particularly later in the day and week. It was also reported that 15% reported weekly FOMO and 50 %

reported experiencing FOMO at least once a month (Milyavskaya et al., 2018).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the incidence of experiencing FOMO is increasing drastically, and so is the scientific research on it. While a breadth of research studies has been published on this topic within a decade, there is little understanding regarding its research trends, impact, and gaps. One method to do so is to collate and analyze the highest cited studies. The premise being that the research with higher importance and implications will be read more and cited more frequently (Parmar et al., 2019). Ranking papers based on their citation counts is called citation analysis (Zhang et al., 2021). Additionally, studies having accumulated more than 400 citations can be categorized as citation classic (Garfield, n.d.). Several recent studies have used citation analysis in various psychiatric issues, including sleep medicine (Park et al., 2020), dyslexia (Zhang et al., 2021), autism (Sweileh et al., 2016), depression (Lipsman & Lozano, 2011), obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) (Parmar et al., 2019), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or varied aspects of different mental health issues such as internet usage among individuals with intellectual deficits (Mengual-Andrés et al., 2020), pain and depression (Du et al., 2020) and binge drinking (Cortés-Tomás et al., 2021). FOMO is a highly prevalent mental health concern, strongly associated with various negative outcomes. Hence, we aimed to identify and examine the characteristics of the top-cited articles in FOMO research.

### **Method**

We conducted a retrospective citation analysis. It is a quantitative and bibliometric research design which uses citation counts to rank papers (Parmar et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Figure 1 shows the process of identifying the top 50 articles.

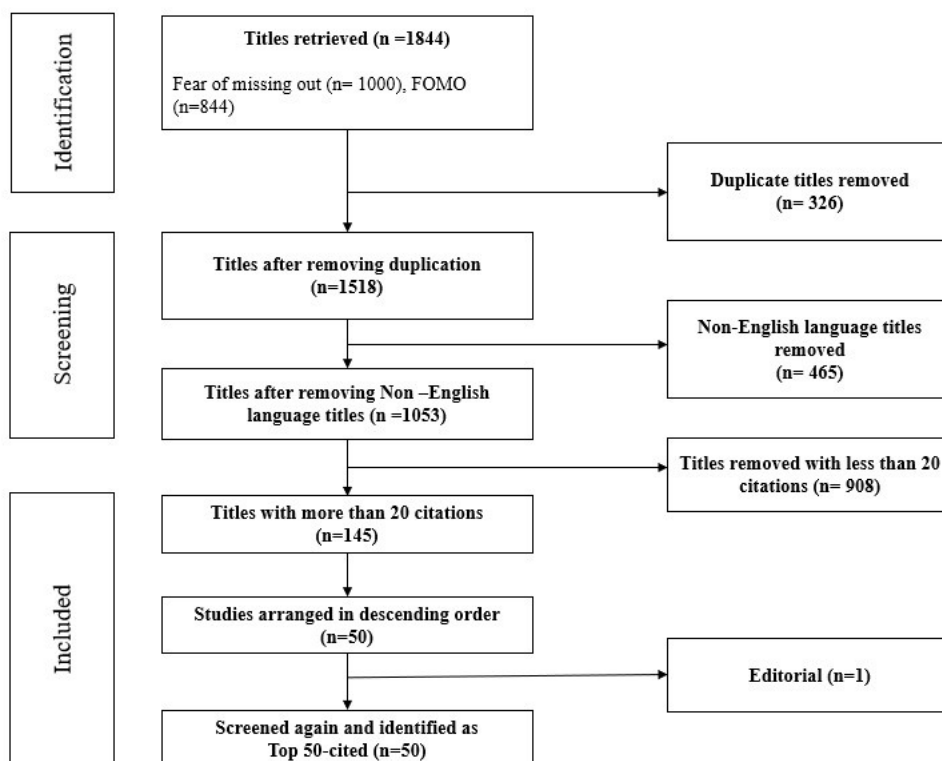


Figure 1: Flow diagram displaying the process of identification of the top-50 studies

### Search strategy

A title-specific search was conducted in September 2022 using the key terms ‘fear of missing out’ or ‘FOMO’ without any time period defined. We used Harzing’s Publish or Perish, an open access software (Harzing, 2016), to retrieve the articles and their citations from Google Scholar (GS). We chose GS for our search because as compared to other databases, it has a broader scope. For instance, Web of Science (WoS) recognizes only the articles which are published in journals indexed with Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) (Meho & Yang, 2007).

We queried the software to produce maximum results i.e. 1000 items. The term “fear of missing out” produced 1000 titles and ‘fomo’ produced 844 titles resulting in 1844 titles. After removing the titles (n=791), which were duplicates and were not in the English language 1053 titles were retained. For further screening, we excluded all articles that had been cited less than 20 times yielding a result of 145 titles. These articles were sorted in descending order based on the citation count and the top 50 were identified.

### Article selection

These titles and abstracts were again reviewed by both authors (KG and NP) separately resulting in removing one item as it was an editorial. The discrepancies were resolved after further discussion with the remaining two authors (AK and VP). The next top-cited article in the list was added in its place and finally, the top 50 articles were identified for synthesis.

### Data Extraction and Synthesis

The data retrieved from the software was cross-checked. The following domains were collected: title of the articles, year of publication, keywords, authors, first author, institutional affiliation of the first author, first author's country, number of citations, citations per year, category of research, journal name, and publisher. In the case the affiliation of the first author was missing, we used the correspondence author's affiliation. Also, if a single author had more than two affiliations, we counted both separately. The data was presented using IBM SPSS Statistics 23.

### Results

Table 1 presents the list of the top 50 cited articles on fear of missing out in descending order according to their respective citation counts.

**Table 1: The top 50-cited studies on 'fear of missing out' based on total citations.**

Rank	Title	Number of citations	Citations per year
1	Motivational, emotional, and behavioral correlates of fear of missing out	2497	277.44
2	Negative consequences from heavy social networking in adolescents: The mediating role of fear of missing out	760	152
3	Fear of missing out, need for touch, anxiety and depression are related to problematic smartphone use	750	125
4	Extraversion, neuroticism, attachment style and fear of missing out as predictors of social media use and addiction	682	136.4
5	No more FOMO: Limiting social media decreases loneliness and depression	663	165.75
6	"I don't want to miss a thing": Adolescents' fear of missing out and its relationship to adolescents' social needs, Facebook use, and Facebook related stress	620	103.33
7	Online social media fatigue and psychological wellbeing—A study of compulsive use, fear of missing out, fatigue, anxiety and depression	560	140
8	College students' academic motivation, media engagement and fear of missing out	514	73.43

9	Problematic smartphone use and relations with negative affect, fear of missing out, and fear of negative and positive evaluation	407	101.75
10	Social media and the fear of missing out: Scale development and assessment	382	63.67
11	Motivators of online vulnerability: The impact of social network site use and FOMO	297	59.4
12	Fear of missing out: Relationships with depression, mindfulness, and physical symptoms.	285	47.5
13	Online-specific fear of missing out and Internet-use expectancies contribute to symptoms of Internet-communication disorder	258	51.6
14	Fear of missing out as a predictor of problematic social media use and phubbing behavior among Flemish adolescents	245	61.25
15	Fear of missing out: prevalence, dynamics, and consequences of experiencing FOMO	223	55.75
16	Personality, fear of missing out and problematic internet use and their relationship to subjective well-being	214	42.8
17	Fear of missing out: Testing relationships with negative affectivity, online social engagement, and problematic smartphone use	191	47.75
18	Neuroticism, trait fear of missing out, and phubbing: The mediating role of state fear of missing out and problematic Instagram use	183	91.5
19	Fear of missing out (FoMO) and rumination mediate relations between social anxiety and problematic Facebook use	180	60
20	Facebook intrusion, fear of missing out, narcissism, and life satisfaction: A cross-sectional study	169	42.25
21	Social media use and the fear of missing out (FoMO) while studying abroad	166	23.71
22	Psychosocial well-being and social media engagement: The mediating roles of social comparison orientation and fear of missing out	157	52.33
23	Fear of missing out and sleep: Cognitive behavioural factors in adolescents' nighttime social media use	149	37.25
24	Fear of missing out (FOMO) is associated with activation of the right middle temporal gyrus during inclusion social cue	149	24.83
25	Depression and anxiety symptoms are related to problematic smartphone use severity in Chinese young adults: Fear of missing out as a mediator	142	71
26	'Fear of Missing Out'(FOMO) marketing appeals: A conceptual model	139	46.33
27	Students' wellbeing, fear of missing out, and social media engagement for leisure in higher education learning environments	136	34

28	Fear of missing out (FoMO): The relationship between FoMO, alcohol use, and alcohol-related consequences in college students	134	19.14
29	Exploring the role of positive metacognitions in explaining the association between the fear of missing out and social media addiction	121	30.25
30	The social media party: Fear of missing out (FoMO), social media intensity, connection, and well-being	120	60
31	Time-shifting vs. appointment viewing: The role of fear of missing out within TV consumption behaviors	118	19.67
32	Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and social media's impact on daily-life and productivity at work: Do WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat Use Disorders mediate that association	118	59
33	Investigating the links between fear of missing out, social media addiction, and emotional symptoms in adolescence: The role of stress associated with neglect and ...	116	58
34	Fear of Missing Out, online social networking and mobile phone addiction: A latent profile approach	111	22.2
35	The young and the restless: Socializing trumps sleep, fear of missing out, and technological distractions in first-year college students	106	21.2
36	Is my fear of missing out (FOMO) causing fatigue? Advertising, social media fatigue, and the implications for consumers and brands	101	25.25
37	Links between adolescents' deep and surface learning approaches, problematic Internet use, and fear of missing out (FOMO)	99	24.75
38	Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina—Scale and selected mechanisms	99	24.75
39	Interpersonally-based fears during the COVID-19 pandemic: reflections on the fear of missing out and the fear of not mattering constructs	87	43.5
40	The fear of missing out scale: Validation of the Arabic version and correlation with social media addiction	86	14.33
41	Boredom proneness and fear of missing out mediate relations between depression and anxiety with problematic smartphone use	85	42.5
42	Passive social networking site use and well-being: The mediating roles of social comparison and the fear of missing out	79	26.33
43	Fear of missing out (FOMO): overview, theoretical underpinnings, and literature review on relations with severity of negative affectivity and problematic technology use	79	39.5



44	The need to belong and adolescent authentic self-presentation on SNSs: A moderated mediation model involving FoMO and perceived social support	78	19.5
45	Family environment and problematic internet use among adolescents: The mediating roles of depression and fear of missing out	75	37.5
46	Students' social media engagement and fear of missing out (FoMO) in a diverse classroom	75	15
47	Understanding patterns for smartphone addiction: Age, sleep duration, social network use and fear of missing out	74	18.5
48	Fear of missing out is associated with disrupted activities from receiving smartphone notifications and surface learning in college students	73	24.33
49	Depression, anxiety and fear of missing out as correlates of social, non-social and problematic smartphone use	72	36
50	Fantasy sport, FoMO, and traditional fandom: How second-screen use of social media allows fans to accommodate multiple identities	69	11.5

### General details

The identified top 50 articles were published from 2013 to 2021 with a total number of citations ranging from 69 to 2497. The sum total of all the citations is 13293 (mean=265.86, SD  $\pm$  375.55). Among the top 50 articles, the highest number of publications (Figure 2) and highest cited (Figure 3) are from the period of 2016-18. Coincidentally, the highest cited article with 2497 citations *Fear of missing out, FoMO, Human motivation, Individual differences, Social networking, Scale development* was published in the earliest year (Przybylski et al., 2013). Among these 18 % (n=9) can be categorized as citation classic having been cited more than 400 times. Almost all the articles (n=49) are original research except one which is a review article. A word cloud of the keywords shows the most frequently used keywords among the identified articles (Figure 4).



### Authorship and affiliations

A total of 169 authors contributed to the 50 articles. Among these, 15 authors have contributed the most (Table 2) with JD Elhai have contributed the highest number of articles (n=10). In terms of the first author as well, JD Elhai published the highest number of articles (n=5), followed by D Alt (n=4), CA Wolniewicz (n=2), and D Rozgonjuk (n=2).

**Table 2: Authors with at least two in the top 50-cited articles on ‘fear of missing out’**

Author (with at 2 and above publications)	Frequency of articles published
JD Elhai	10
D Rozgonjuk	4
D Alt	4
U Oberst	3
H Yang	3
BJ Hall	3
X Wang	3
S Casale	2
MF Tiamiyu	2
M Brand	2
JC Levine	2
E Wegmann	2
CA Wolniewicz	2
C Montag	2
B Stodt	2

These publications originated from 40 institutions and 18 countries. In terms of institutional affiliation, the highest productivity was from the University of Toledo, USA (n = 7) with 1821 citations, Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee, Israel (n= 4) with 824 citations, Tianjin Normal University (n =4) with 484 citations, and University of Florence (n=2) with 208 citations. Regarding the country of origin, the USA was the most productive country of origin (n =19) followed by China (n=5), Israel (n=5), Italy (n=5), the UK (n=3), and Germany (n=3).

### Sources: Journals

The identified studies were published in 34 journals. The journals with the greatest number of citations are *Computers in Human Behavior* (n=9) and *Addictive Behaviors* (n =5). Table 3 presents the journals and their basic details most associated with the top-50 list.

**Table 3: Journals and their details with at least two in the top 50-cited articles on ‘fear of missing out’**

<b>Journal with 2 or more publications</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Number of publications</b>	<b>Impact factor of the Journal</b>	<b>Indexed with Scopus</b>	<b>Indexed with WoS</b>
Computers in Human Behavior	Elsevier	9	8.957	✓	✓
Addictive Behaviors	Elsevier	5	4.591	✓	✓
Addictive Behaviors Reports	Elsevier	2	-	✓	-
Personality and Individual Differences	Elsevier	2	3.950	✓	✓
Psychiatry Research	Elsevier	2	11.225	✓	✓
Journal of Adolescence	Wiley-Blackwell	2	3.675	✓	✓

### **Discussion**

Retrospective citation analysis, though far from perfect, is one of the most frequently used and accepted methods for understanding the research trends of a particular field or topic. Our study identifies the top 50 cited articles on FOMO research. FOMO, being an apprehension regarding not being a part of what others are doing (Przybylski et al., 2013) might not be a new phenomenon but a predisposed human tendency. Nevertheless, the term is quite new, which entered the vernacular around two decades back (Reagle, 2014), and scientific interest a decade back (Przybylski et al., 2013). Contrary to a traditional review paper, our study provides a comprehensive list of the highest impactful articles and their characteristics.

The top-50 cited articles clustered over 9 years (2013-2021). The sum of the citations was 13293 and the highest cited article’s citation count was 2495. While this is quite low, as compared to other mental health-related issues such as OCD where the highest cited article has 7809 citations (Parmar et al., 2019) or depression with 15590 citations (Lipsman & Lozano, 2011), FOMO as a scientific topic is quite recent. Moreover, though FOMO is a highly prevalent experience, it is not a full-fledged disorder. As per Garfield’s criteria of citation classic i.e. any research study that is cited over 400 times, nine articles (Alt, 2015; Beyens et al., 2016; Blackwell et al., 2017; Dhir et al., 2018; Elhai et al., 2016; Hunt et al., 2018; Oberst et al., 2017; Przybylski et al., 2013; Wolniewicz et al., 2018) from this list can be categorized as citation classic. Given that these findings are from research published within a single decade, FOMO appears to be a relevant research topic. Another interesting finding is that almost all articles in the list except one are original studies. This might be due to the topic

being considerably recent, and the review papers would have been published in very recent years.

Regarding the origin of studies, the USA was found to be the most prolific nation with 38% of the titles from the top-50 list. This could be attributed to the fact that American researchers tend to cite their own country's researchers more (Parmar et al., 2019). Additionally, the USA leads the globe in terms of research and development spending (Statista Research Department, 2022). Nevertheless, the University of Toledo, again from the USA emerged as the most productive institution in this list.

Our study is not without limitations. A major methodological limitation of citation analysis is that as citation counts are bound to be higher in earlier published articles, high-impact articles published in recent years could be missed. To overcome this, we have calculated citations per year as well. Second, our analysis did not account for self-citations and in-house citations. Moreover, such approaches cannot differentiate between positive and negative citations. Finally, regarding the affiliations in terms of country of origin or university, the first author's credentials might not necessarily reflect the origin of the study precisely. In the case of collaborative research, guided research, or funded research, the origin of the study could be different. Despite these limitations, our research provides comprehensive information regarding the scientific growth in this area.

### **Conclusion**

In the current study, we identified and summarized the top 50-cited articles on FOMO. It presents insights into how the concept has entered and gained traction as a relevant research area within one decade starting from 2013. New investigators and/or students can use the list of top 50 articles as a beginning guide to exploring the concept. The highest impact articles are mostly original studies which are mostly quantitative in nature. The findings of this study may help researchers to save time in determining the current status of research, identifying hotspots and gaps, and anticipating future significant topics in this area.

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### **Availability of data and material**

Not applicable.

### **Conflict of Interest**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### **Author's contributions**

KG designed the study. KG and NP acquired the data and performed statistical analyses. KG, NP, AK, and VP wrote the manuscript. All authors critically revised the manuscript and approved the final version.

**Informed Consent**

Not applicable

**Ethics Approval**

Not applicable.

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