



Impulsive Buying and Compulsive Buying: Is There a Differential Contribution of Social Media Overuse and Fear of Missing Out?

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Abstract

Background: Spending too much time on social media has become an epidemic in today's digital era and has been linked to various negative consequences. On the other hand, FOMO is social media-related anxiety characterized by fear of missing out on exciting or interesting events, often driven by constant updates, notifications, and posts on social media, often linked to overuse. The research explores whether social media overuse and fear of missing out develop compulsive buying behavior or impulsive buying behavior.

Methods: Online survey data from 249 Indian young adults who actively use social media were collected using Social networking addiction scale, fear of missing out scale, compulsive buying scale, and impulsive buying scale. Mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were used as measures of descriptive statistics.

Result: Results from multiple regression analysis revealed that increased social media use of individuals fearing missing out predicted heightened impulsive buying tendencies and compulsive buying behavior. Additionally, mediation analysis suggests that impulsive buying behavior acts as a mediator, where excessive social media usage induces impulsive buying tendencies that can drive compulsive buying behavior to mitigate anxiety and avoid the fear of missing out.

Conclusion: This research can advance social change by guiding policy and instruction on digital media literacy, regulation on social media use, therapeutic interventions provided by educational institutions, and psychological services provided by other organizations, all of which can enhance young adults' mental health and well-being.

Keywords: Social-media overuse; Fear of missing out; Impulsive buying behavior; Compulsive buying behavior; Young Adults

Abbreviations

FOMO: Fear of Missing Out; CBB: Compulsive Buying Behaviour; SNAS: Social Networking Addiction Scale; CBS: Compulsive Buying Scale; IBTS: Impulse Buying Tendency Scale.

Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of our lives, with billions of people using it daily to connect with loved ones, stay informed, and consume entertainment. In 2023, an estimated 4.9 billion people used social media worldwide, of

which 398.0 million users in India were 18 years or older or 40.2 percent of the country's entire population. Significantly, the average person globally spends a significant portion of their day-about 145 minutes-on social media. Interestingly, Indians, on average, spend about 141.6 minutes on social media daily [1]. On the other hand, "Shopping" is a common pastime that many people view as innocent yet essential to modern lifestyle. Almost everyone enjoys shopping for and purchasing non-essential products to some extent. However, when shopping turns into a "compulsion" or "addiction," it may become troublesome and cause severe problems in various areas of life, including the personal, professional, and financial realms.

Consequently, social media has become an effective means for companies to communicate with their target market. Over 88 percent of firms utilize Twitter for marketing, and over 50 million businesses have Facebook profiles. Companies can use social media and digital marketing to accomplish their marketing objectives at a minimal cost. An increasing number of people are interacting with businesses, exchanging ideas with other consumers, and searching for information online. The digital age has transformed our relationship with shopping, and social media has emerged as a powerful force shaping consumer behavior. In contrast, offering convenience and connection, its impact on individuals prone to compulsive buying warrants closer examination.

Social Media Use and Overuse

It is reported that social media can boost oxytocin production, reduce stress, and promote positive emotions. Online interactions are often less emotionally taxing than in-person ones. The minimal effort yields happiness derived from likes and support [2-5]. Recently, social media has been a potent tool for businesses to connect with a broader audience and offer personalized marketing and advertising, enhancing customer engagement. However, excessive social media use has also been linked to several negative consequences, including anxiety, depression, and sleep problems [6]. One of the most concerning potential consequences of social media overuse is its role in developing impulsive buying and compulsive buying behaviors. These behaviors are characterized by sudden, unplanned purchases that are often made without considering the financial consequences.

Social media has become a powerful channel for businesses to connect with their target audience. More than 50 million businesses have Facebook pages, and over 88 percent use Twitter for marketing. Social media platforms often use targeted advertising to promote products and services to users. This advertising can be highly effective, especially when tailored to the user's interests and needs. Also, social media platforms often use features such as "like" and "share"

buttons to encourage users to interact with and share product content. This can create a sense of social pressure to purchase products, even if the user does not need or want them [7].

Fear of Missing Out

Social media can influence impulsive and compulsive buying by creating a fear of missing out. Fear of missing out is a feeling of anxiety or distress that arises from the belief that others are having more enjoyable or fulfilling experiences than oneself. Social media can contribute to this by exposing users to a curated view of other people's lives, often making it seem like everyone else is having a better time [8]. This can lead users to impulse purchases to keep up with their peers. While the precise psychological mechanisms behind the link between social media overuse, fear of missing out (FOMO), and impulsive/compulsive buying remain under investigation, several factors likely contribute. One key influence is the elevated stress and anxiety associated with excessive social media use and FOMO. These emotions can impair cognitive judgment and weaken impulse control, making resisting the urge for impulsive purchases harder. Social media also fosters social comparison, potentially making users feel pressured to acquire similar possessions as their peers flaunt their latest purchases. Individuals with financial struggles or low self-esteem may be particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of this social comparison process [9].

Social media can also encourage compulsive and impulsive spending since it makes online shopping simpler and easier. Thanks to the one-click checkout feature on many social media sites, users find it simple to make impulsive purchases without a second thought. Social networking sites frequently offer specials and discounts to encourage impulsive purchasing. Impulsive buying and compulsive buying are two different aspects of consumer behaviour [10].

Impulsive Buying Behavior

Social media has become an undeniable force in shaping our lives, including our buying habits. Research increasingly suggests a positive association between social media use and impulsive buying, highlighting how carefully curated online spaces can trigger unplanned purchases Singh J, et al. [11]. Impulsive buying is unplanned purchases driven by sudden urges, while compulsive buying is an uncontrollable urge to buy, often disregarding the need or financial limitations. Social media plays a role in these behaviors by exposing users to targeted advertisements and comparisons with others with more exciting lives. Sung Y, et al. found that individuals experiencing a higher fear of missing out and heavy social media use are likelier to engage in these behaviors.

One key mechanism lies in the emotional impact of social media. Heavy social media use has been linked to increased levels of anxiety and stress [12]. These negative emotions can impair judgment and self-control, making individuals more susceptible to impulsive buying as a coping mechanism [13]. The fear of missing out (FOMO) on social media can fuel impulsive purchases as users strive to keep up with perceived trends and experiences showcased by their peers. The social comparison further exacerbates this issue, with users feeling pressured to purchase similar products displayed by their connections, especially for individuals with low self-esteem or financial difficulties [14].

Different social media platforms can have varying effects on impulsive buying. According to Liu, et al. [15], platforms emphasizing visual content and influencer marketing, such as Instagram, are more likely to trigger impulsive purchases than text-based platforms like Twitter. Marketing strategies employed by these platforms, such as limited-time offers, personalized recommendations, and social proof through user reviews, can further incentivize impulsive buying behavior. Dhir A, et al. [16] state that excessive social media usage is more closely connected to impulsive purchasing. It is essential to recognize that the impact of social media on impulsive buying is unique. Individual differences in personality traits like impulsivity, materialism, and self-control significantly mediate this relationship. Also, cultural factors and socioeconomic background can influence how individuals respond to social media cues and marketing strategies [17].

Compulsive Buying Behavior

Compulsive buying behavior (CBB), characterized by uncontrollable urges to purchase unnecessary or unwanted items, affects a significant portion of the population. Estimates suggest that 2% to 8% of the population might meet diagnostic criteria for Compulsive buying behavior, causing substantial financial and emotional distress. Social media platforms have become ubiquitous, weaving into the fabric of our daily lives. Their interactive nature, curated content, and targeted marketing create a potent cocktail that can influence purchasing decisions, showing a positive correlation between increased social media use and Compulsive buying behaviour symptoms. Social media algorithms curate feeds with aspirational lifestyles, showcasing influencers with the latest trends. This constant exposure cultivates a desire to emulate these perceived ideals, often achieved through materialistic pursuits. Targeted advertising leverages personal data to bombard users with tempting offers, exploiting their vulnerabilities and triggering impulsive purchases.

Apart from that, social media fosters a culture of instant gratification. The “buy now, pay later” mentality thrives

in this space, fueled by one-click purchases and seamless checkout experiences. This convenience removes the friction from spending; making it easier to fall into compulsive buying traps. The impact is particularly pronounced among young adults. Przybylski AK, et al. [5] found a positive correlation between social media use and compulsive buying tendencies in this demographic. This vulnerability stems from factors like developing self-identity and social comparison, making them susceptible to the pressures and influences prevalent on social media. Hence, this study breaks new ground by exploring the link between social media overuse, fear of missing out, and buying behavior in young adults, filling a gap in the existing literature. It tries to explain whether social media overuse and fear of missing out influence individuals to develop impulsive or compulsive buying behavior. While digitalization has undoubtedly revolutionized our lives, its influence on consumer behavior raises concerns for individual well-being and sustainable development. Research links social media overuse with the development of compulsive buying behavior fueled by factors like targeted advertising, instant gratification, and the pressure to keep up with idealized online personas. This translates to a cycle of impulse purchases and excessive consumption, often exceeding needs and contributing to environmental strain through resource depletion and waste generation. Studies indicate that the younger demographic, particularly vulnerable to social comparison and Fear of Missing Out, is especially susceptible. While individual factors and mental health conditions play a role, the pervasive nature of social media and its marketing tactics cannot be ignored.

A review of related literature reveals separate studies on the Fear of Missing Out, Social Media Addiction, Impulsive Buying behavior, and Compulsive Buying behavior. However, little evidence exists to ascertain how these four variables interact together, mainly through the lens of a mediating variable. Thus, owing to the importance of the state of addiction, fear, and buying behavior seen in young adults and related consequences, this study identifies this relationship as the research gap and a matter of investigation. It is thus imperative to understand how the relationship worked in the dynamics of social media-induced buying addiction, impulsive shopping behavioral intention in youth and FOMO, and what direction. The present-day scenario of social media usage and the consequent buying behavior in youth raises numerous questions that must be addressed. For the current study, investigators identified the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** How does the use of social media influence compulsive buying behavior among emerging adults?
- **RQ2:** How does the use of social media influence impulsive buying behavior among emerging adults?
- **RQ3:** How does the use of fear of missing out develop compulsive buying behavior among emerging adults?

- **RQ4:** How does the use of fear of missing out develop impulsive buying behavior among emerging adults?
- **RQ5:** Is the fear of missing out and social media overuse predicting factors for compulsive buying behavior?
- **RQ6:** Is the fear of missing out and social media overuse predicting factors for impulsive buying behavior?

Hypothesis

- **H1:** Social Media Overuse and Compulsive Buying will have a significant relationship.
- **H2:** Fear of Missing Out and Compulsive Buying will have a significant relationship.
- **H3:** Social Media Overuse and Impulsive Buying will have a significant relationship.
- **H4:** Fear of Missing Out and Impulse Buying will have a significant relationship.
- **H5:** There will be a significant prediction of Impulsive Buying Tendency by Social Media Overuse and Fear of Missing Out.
- **H6:** There will be a significant prediction of Compulsive Buying Behaviour by Social Media Overuse and Fear of Missing Out.

Methods

The current study investigates whether social media abuse and fear of missing out are predictors of compulsive or impulsive buying. A quantitative non-experimental survey design anchored in a positivist paradigm was used in this study to investigate the extent to which social media overuse and fear of missing out influence impulsive buying behavior and compulsive buying behavior. This study used an Internet-based survey and a printed questionnaire, which was both cost-effective and beneficial in reaching a large number of people in a short amount of time across a vast geographic area. The target population for this study was young adults aged 18-29 in India. The sampling criteria include that participants had to actively use at least one social media account for more than 6 hours daily. The sample was limited to Indian participants to minimize cultural factors that may influence differences in the independent variables (i.e., social media use and fear of missing out). Following Institutional Review Board approval, a convenience sampling strategy was used for this study. Participants were recruited on a volunteer basis for the study's inclusion criteria. Potential participants who met the inclusion criteria and wished to participate in the study were directed to a link that included an informed consent form, eligibility screening questions that required participants to confirm they met the inclusion criteria, a demographic questionnaire, and the survey instruments.

All data for the research was collected anonymously. Data was collected from 249 participants. The approximate time to

complete all survey items is 20-30 minutes. The questionnaire gathered general demographic and background information about the participants for the data collection. The following psychometric tools were used:

Social Networking Addiction Scale (SNAS)

A 7-pointer Likert scale of 21 items was developed by Shahnawaz MG, et al. [18] If the goal is to find/ explore the addiction dimensions or it is to be used on patients, the dimension-wise score can be obtained by summing up items under each dimension. A total score can be obtained by summing up all the items. The score can range from 21 to 147. Any score above a total score of 84 signifies addiction. Cronbach's alpha values (0.87-0.95) across the entire scale and sub-scales indicate strong internal consistency, meaning items within each dimension measure the same construct effectively. For Test-Retest Reliability, a study over 25 days reported a correlation of 0.88, suggesting the scale captures a relatively stable construct that does not fluctuate significantly over time.

Fear of Missing out Scale (FOMO) is a 10-item Likert-type scale developed by Przybylski AK, et al. [8]. Participants indicated how true each statement was of their general experiences (e.g., "I fear others have more rewarding experiences than me."; "When I miss out on a planned get-together, it bothers me.") along a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (i.e., Not at all true of me) to 5 (i.e., Extremely true of me). The scale takes approximately two minutes to complete. The scale has been shown to demonstrate high internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$) [8]. The scale will give a raw score ranging from 10 to 50. The average using all ten items was computed to yield a single score. No official cut-off points have been established to definitively categorize individuals as having "high" or "low" FoMO. Interpretation is generally flexible, with higher scores indicating a stronger tendency to experience FoMO.

Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS) is an 11-item Likert scale developed by Valence et al. in 1988 and is a widely used measure of pathological buying behavior. The current scale version contained three aspects: reactive, tendency to spend money, and post-purchase guilt. The scale demonstrates good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.78$ to 0.93) for the total scale and ($\alpha = 0.68$ to 0.91) for the subscales. Use a Likert scale (e.g., 1 = never, 5 = very often) for each item and sum the scores. Calculating subscale scores for each dimension in the scale. If the subject scores 36 or higher out of 55, they will be considered a compulsive buyer.

Impulse Buying Tendency Scale (IBTS) is a 20-item Likert scale developed by Verplanken D. and Herabadi A. along a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (i.e., never) to 5 (i.e., very often).

The scale measures two distinct dimensions of impulsive buying, including cognitive impulsive buying and affective impulsive buying. The internal consistency typically ranges from 0.80 to 0.90 for the total scale and 0.70 to 0.85 for the subscales. No universal cutoff point exists for the scale. The interpretation can vary depending on the research question, population studied, and population setting.

Data collected from the survey platform was downloaded into the software JAMOVI 2.3.26 for data analysis. Correlational analysis was used to determine the correlation between the use of social media and fear of missing out, with impulsive buying behavior and compulsive buying behavior. Multiple Linear Regression analysis was used to identify the significant predictors of the dependent variable, i.e., compulsive buying behavior and impulsive buying behavior. The mediation analysis explored the relationship between social media overuse and fear of missing out with compulsive buying behavior when impulsive buying behavior acted as a mediator and the relationship with impulsive buying behavior when compulsive buying behavior acted as a mediator.

Results

Sociodemographic Details of the Sample

Table 1 shows the sociodemographic details of the sample. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 29 years ($M \pm SD = 22.4 \pm 2.47$). The mean age of the sample in the present study is very similar to the findings from the statistical report on the social media-addicted population in India [19]. The majority of participants had studied up to a moderate level of formal education. The education years ranged from 12 to 20 (mean \pm SD = 15.3 ± 1.77). The gender distribution was nearly evenly distributed, with 127 individuals (51%) identifying as female and 122 (49%) identifying as male. In terms of relationship status, the majority were single (76.35%), followed by dating (20.9%) and married (2.8%). Regarding occupation, students comprised a sizable majority (63.9%), with others representing working or non-student groups comprising 36.1% of the sample. The living situation indicated that 46.6% of individuals lived independently while 53.4% lived with family. Furthermore, the participants' active social media handles were divided, with 35.7% having

less than four handles, 12.9% having precisely four handles, and the majority (51.4%) having more than four handles.

Variables	N(%) or Mean \pm SD
Age (in years)	22.4 \pm 2.47
Education	15.3 \pm 1.77
Gender	
Female	127 (51%)
Male	122 (49%)
Marital Status	
Single	190 (76.35%)
Dating	52 (20.9%)
Married	7 (2.8%)
Occupation	
Student	159 (63.9%)
Others	90 (36.1%)
Living status	
Without family	116 (46.6%)
With family	133 (53.4%)
No. of social media handles	
Less than 4	89 (35.7%)
4	32 (12.9%)
More than 4	128 (51.4%)

Table 1: Descriptives Statistics for demographic details of the participant's.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the independent and dependent variables of participants. The descriptive statistics suggest that the participants in the study have moderate levels of social media addiction, Fear of missing out, compulsive buying behavior, and impulsive buying behavior. The fact that the Shapiro-Wilk test is significant for all four variables suggests that the data is not normally distributed. It is important to note that this study is correlational and cannot establish causation. Therefore, it suggests that people addicted to social media and/or fearing missing out may be more likely to engage in impulsive buying behavior. Hence, hypotheses 3 and 4 are accepted.

Instrument	Mean	SD	Cronbach's	Shapiro-Wilk	
				W	P
Social Networking Addiction Scale	72.7	23.25	0.918	0.99	0.093
Fear of Missing Out	25.8	8.41	0.762	0.99	0.026
Compulsive Buying Scale	27.5	9.98	0.897	0.98	<.001
Impulsive Buying Scale	51.4	12.66	0.83	0.99	0.031

Table 2: Descriptives Statistics of the independent and dependent variables of participants.

Correlational Analysis

Table 3 presents Spearman's correlation analysis results on four key variables: social media addiction, fear of missing out, compulsive buying behavior, and impulsive buying behavior. The study reveals a strong positive correlation between Social Media Overuse and Fear of Missing Out ($\rho = 0.521$), implying that individuals addicted to social media are likelier to experience a heightened fear of missing out. This connection is attributed to social media platforms fostering engagement and exposing users to various products, creating a sense of urgency. A moderate positive correlation exists between Social Media Overuse and Compulsive Buying Behavior ($\rho = 0.457$), indicating that social media addicts are prone to engaging in compulsive buying. The exposure to numerous products and a cultivated sense of urgency contribute to impulsive purchases. A weaker positive correlation is found between Social Media Overuse and Impulsive Buying Behavior ($\rho = 0.284$), suggesting a likelihood of social media addicts participating in impulsive buying, albeit to a lesser extent than compulsive buying. Impulsive Buying

Behavior encompasses additional factors such as impulsivity and sensation seeking. Fear of Missing Out shows a moderate positive correlation between Compulsive Buying Behavior ($\rho = 0.419$) and Impulsive Buying Behavior ($\rho = 0.324$). This implies that individuals fearing missing out are more inclined to engage in compulsive and impulsive buying, with the connection stronger for compulsive buying.

Compulsive Buying Behavior and Impulsive Buying Behavior exhibit a strong positive correlation ($\rho = 0.721$), indicating a close relationship between these behaviors. Both involve a lack of spending control and a tendency towards impulsive purchases. In summary, the study suggests intricate interconnections among social media addiction, fear of missing out, compulsive buying behavior, and impulsive buying behavior. Those addicted to social media are more likely to experience a fear of missing out and engage in both compulsive and impulsive buying. In contrast, individuals with a high fear of missing out are prone to both types of buying behaviors. Hence, hypotheses 5 and 6 are accepted.

	Social Media Overuse	Fear of Missing Out		Compulsive Buying Behavior		Impulsive Buying Behavior
Social Media Overuse	-					
Fear of missing out	0.521	-				
Compulsive Buying Behavior	0.457	0.419	***	-		
Impulsive Buying Behavior	0.284	0.324	***	0.72	***	-

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3: Spearman Correlation analysis of independent variables with dependent variables.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 4 shows the results of a multiple linear regression model predicting compulsive buying behavior, with social media addiction and fear of missing out as predictors. The model explains 25.9% of the variation in compulsive buying behavior, making it statistically significant with an R-squared of 0.259. A higher level of correlation exists between social media overuse and fear of missing out when it comes to predicting compulsive purchase behavior. This suggests that people addicted to social media and/or have a high fear of

missing out are more likely to engage in compulsive buying behavior. Addicts on social media could lose hours scrolling through their feeds, which exposes them to a wide range of products and services, increasing their awareness of potential purchases. Individuals who develop a sense of urgency and scarcity through social media may buy compulsively. On social media, people also compare themselves to others, which might make them think they need to buy certain things to stay up, making them more likely to see ads for products they are interested in, heightening their urge to purchase.

Predictor	Estimate	p	R ²	Overall Model Fit
Intercept	9.52	< .001	0.26	F (2)= 43.1
Social Media Overuse	0.156	< .001		p= <.001
Fear of missing out	0.256	< .001		

Table 4: Multiple Linear Regression Model for Compulsive Buying Behavior.

Table 5 shows that both social media addiction and fear of missing out are significant predictors of impulsive buying behavior. This means that people addicted to social media and/or have a high fear of missing out are more likely to engage in impulsive buying behavior. The coefficient for Fear of missing out (0.3543) is more significant than that for Social Media Overuse (0.0873), which suggests that Fear of missing out has a more substantial influence on impulsive buying behavior. The overall model fit is good, with an R-squared of 0.120, which means the model explains 12% of the variance in impulsive buying behavior. Social media exposes people to a wide range of products and services, making them more aware of potential purchases. It can also create a sense of

urgency and scarcity, leading to people making impulsive purchases.

Also, social media can lead people to compare themselves to others, making them feel they need to buy certain things to keep up. Fear of missing out is the feeling that you are missing out on essential or enjoyable experiences that your peers have. This can lead to people making impulsive purchases to avoid missing out. For example, someone with a Fear of missing out may see their friends posting about a new product or experience on social media and feel they need to buy it immediately to keep up.

Predictor	Estimate	p	R ²	Overall Model Fit
Intercept	35.8889	< .001	0.1	F (2)= 16.7
Social Media Overuse	0.0873	< .022		p= <.001
Fear of missing out	0.3543	< .001		

Table 5: Multiple Linear Regression Model for Impulsive Buying Behavior.

Mediation Model Analysis

Table 6 shows the mediation analysis results of the complex relationships between Social Media Overuse, Fear of missing out, Impulsive Buying Behavior, and Compulsive Buying Behavior. The results show that Social Media Overuse and Fear of missing out significantly indirectly affect Compulsive Buying Behavior through Impulsive Buying Behavior. This means that Social Media Overuse and Fear of missing out can

lead to Compulsive Buying Behavior by increasing people's impulsiveness and desire to buy things. Also, social media overuse significantly directly affects Compulsive Buying Behavior, even after accounting for the indirect effect of Impulsive Buying Behavior, which means social media overuse is directly and indirectly associated with Compulsive Buying Behavior through Impulsive Buying Behavior.

Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	95% C.I. (a)		β	z	p
				Lower	Upper			
Indirect	Social Media Overuse ⇒ Impulsive Buying Behavior ⇒ Compulsive Buying Behavior	0.043	0.0188	0.00618	0.0798	0.1001	2.29	0.022
	Fear of missing out ⇒ Impulsive Buying Behavior ⇒ Compulsive Buying Behavior	0.1746	0.0526	0.07138	0.2777	0.1471	3.32	< .001
Direct	Social Media Overuse ⇒ Compulsive Buying Behavior	0.1132	0.0201	0.07372	0.1527	0.2637	5.62	< .001
	Fear of missing out ⇒ Compulsive Buying Behavior	0.0817	0.0564	-0.02875	0.1922	0.0689	1.45	0.147
Total	Social Media Overuse ⇒ Compulsive Buying Behavior	0.1562	0.0273	0.10272	0.2097	0.3639	5.72	< .001
	Fear of missing out ⇒ Compulsive Buying Behavior	0.2563	0.0754	0.10845	0.4041	0.216	3.4	< .001

Note: Confidence intervals computed with method: Standard (Delta method).

Note: Betas are completely standardized effect sizes.

Table 6: Analyzing Mediation Model.

On the other hand, Fear of missing out did not significantly affect Compulsive Buying Behavior after accounting for the indirect effect of Impulsive Buying Behavior. This means that Impulsive Buying Behavior fully mediates the effect of Fear of missing out on Compulsive Buying behavior. Considering both direct and indirect pathways, the total effects further emphasize the substantial influence of Social Media Overuse and Fear of missing out on compulsive buying behaviour (Figure 1).

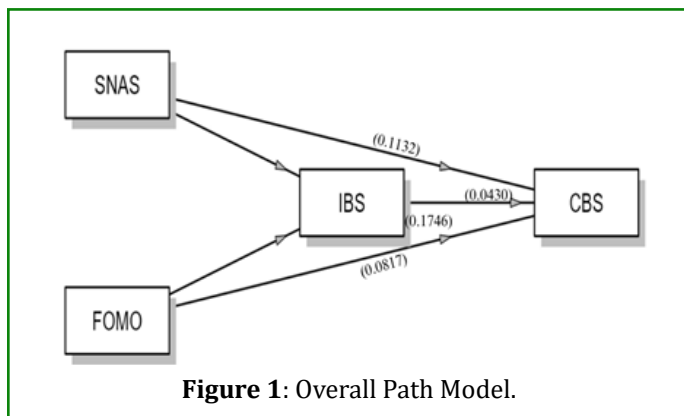


Figure 1: Overall Path Model.

Discussion

The extensive exploration into the relationships between social media addiction, fear of missing out, impulsive buying, and compulsive buying behaviors offers profound insights into contemporary consumer behavior within the digital landscape. The study establishes significant positive associations between social media addiction, fear of missing out, and both impulsive and compulsive buying, shedding light on the intricate dynamics at play among the young adult population.

Considering the demographic details of the sample participants, the young adult population in India spends most of their time on smartphones. Among Indian internet users, 34% were in the 20-29 age brackets, and 17% were in the 16-19 bracket. Regarding daily pageviews, Instagram and Facebook were India's top two social media platforms in 2021. Amazon India, Google Search, etc., were in second and third place, respectively. Also, the culture of indigenous families is collectivistic, where parents and caregivers mostly take care of the needs and desires of the young adults. Thus, they do not indulge much in the concept of financial management independently. Hence, we can say that individuals who spend more time on social media platforms are exposed to various trends and advertisements and buy unnecessary items to satisfy their sudden gratification.

The correlation between social media overuse and compulsive buying behavior is notably robust, aligning with existing

research that emphasizes the pervasive influence of social media on consumer conduct. Kuss DJ, et al. [20] highlighted the detrimental impact of excessive social media use on mental health, emphasizing its role as a potential catalyst for compulsive behaviors. The present findings corroborate and extend these insights by illustrating a direct, unfaltering influence of social media overuse on compulsive buying tendencies. On the other hand, people who fear missing out may see their friends and followers writing about new products and experiences and feel compelled to purchase the same items to stay up. They may also be concerned that they will lose out on something if they wait to purchase it. Thus, an individual who has become addicted to social media and intensely fears missing out may be particularly sensitive to compulsive purchases. For example, they may see a friend's post about a new product on sale for a limited time and feel compelled to buy it immediately, even if they don't truly need or desire it.

Przybylski AK, et al. [8] reveals a subtle relationship between fear of missing out and impulsive buying, with fear of missing out emerging as the primary driver of impulsive buying behavior. The present study highlights the intricate connection between the fear of missing out and impulsive buying within the specific context of social media overuse. It emphasizes that individuals more susceptible to fear of missing out are inclined to make impulsive purchases when exposed to marketing stimuli on social media platforms. Peer pressures via social media websites also play a role, as does the excessive usage of smartphones, which leads to unnecessary exposure to online offers and discounts. Particularly in a developing nation like India, this would cause significant long-term psychological and financial problems for individuals and unstable social and economic situations for communities as a whole.

The moderated mediation model unravels the intricate web of connections, demonstrating how social media overuse indirectly influences compulsive buying through impulsive buying tendencies. This aligns with the findings of Dhir A, et al. [16] the relationship between social media use, fear of missing out, and compulsive buying. The present study extends this understanding by emphasizing the mediating role of impulsive buying in the complex interplay between social media overuse and compulsive buying behaviors. However, the direct effect of fear of missing out on compulsive buying is not statistically significant, suggesting that fear of missing out's influence operates through the mediation of impulsive buying behavior. This aligns with the findings of Andreassen CS, et al. [21], wherein fear of missing out influenced compulsive buying indirectly through maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as impulsive buying. The present study underscores the need for tailored interventions that consider individual variations in fear of missing out levels to address

impulsive and compulsive buying behaviors effectively.

The study's revelation that social media overuse and fear of missing out are substantial predictors of both compulsive and impulsive buying behaviors emphasizes the pivotal role of these variables in shaping consumer conduct. This resonates with the work of Blackwell D, et al. [22], found that social media marketing strategies could significantly impact impulsive buying behaviors. The present study extends this understanding by demonstrating the unique contributions of social media overuse and the fear of missing out on impulsive and compulsive buying tendencies.

In the broader context of consumer behavior, the study underscores the need for marketers and policymakers to consider the implications of excessive social media use on consumer decision-making. Strategies should be crafted with an acute awareness of the intricate interplay between social media, fear of missing out, and impulsive and compulsive buying behaviors [23-25]. Consumer researchers, public politicians, and business organization marketers should consider the detrimental implications of online compulsive buying on people's lives, societal mores, and national economies. Khandelwal, et al. suggests an education program on "personal finance" might benefit young Indian consumers. The program would educate students on managing their money and making responsible purchases. Suppose young customers are subjected to excessive promotions and offers by e-commerce enterprises, resulting in obsessive and impulsive online purchasing. In that case, it is highly recommended that the Government of India implement legislative warnings. Considering this is already common in several market scenarios (online/mobile gaming) in India, the pertinent authorities in the e-commerce space must undertake comparable awareness efforts [26].

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research contributes valuable insights into the complex dynamics of social media addiction, fear of missing out, and impulsive and compulsive buying behaviors among young adults. The positive associations between these variables underscore the need to understand better how digital engagement shapes consumer conduct. The differentiated impact of social media overuse and fear of missing out on impulsive and compulsive buying behaviors adds depth to existing literature. The stronger association of social media overuse with compulsive buying suggests that constant exposure to various products and services on social platforms may contribute to a lack of control over spending.

The moderated mediation model enriches our understanding of the pathways through which social media and fear of missing out jointly influence compulsive buying. The indirect

effects elucidate the role of impulsive buying tendencies as a mediator, showcasing the intricate relationships within this complex framework. This aligns with the call by Kuss, et al. for more comprehensive models that consider the multifaceted nature of internet addiction and its consequences. The direct and indirect effects also highlight the need for targeted interventions. While social media overuse directly influences compulsive buying, the significant indirect effect of fear of missing out through impulsive buying suggests that interventions should address both social media engagement and the fear of missing out to mitigate compulsive buying tendencies [27-29].

Limitations and Future Research

However, the study has limitations. The reliance on self-report measures introduces potential response biases, and the cross-sectional nature restricts the establishment causal relationships. Future research endeavors should consider adopting longitudinal or experimental designs to enhance the robustness of the findings. The sample was taken from young adults who were active Internet users. For future research, different age groups and generations can be used to examine the cross-generational effects of the same issue. A comparative study on gerontology could be conducted on middle and late adults. The study was quantitative and conducted online through Google Forms. Further, researchers could conduct qualitative research on the topic to explore it in detail. The study was conducted on healthy and abled young adults, excluding differently abled or disabled people. These people could be used as a specific sample to compare the results among healthy and differently-abled people. The study provides information regarding certain interventions like self-control theory, which can help alleviate experiences of FOMO and social media addiction. It is suggested that such interventions be presented in seminars or conferences to discuss or present the variables used in the current study.

In conclusion, this research provides a comprehensive exploration of the intricate relationships between social media addiction, fear of missing out, and impulsive and compulsive buying behaviors. The attraction of social media and its ability to trigger compulsive purchasing present a serious risk to sustainable growth. Through cultivating personal consciousness, endorsing conscientious platform behaviors, and enacting sustainable regulations, we may strive towards a future in which social media serves as an instrument for constructive transformation rather than a catalyst for extravagant spending and destruction of the environment. The time to act is now to ensure that our future is not burdened by the unsustainable consequences of compulsive buying fueled by social media. The implications extend to marketers, policymakers, and mental health professionals, emphasizing the importance of tailored

interventions to address the consequences of excessive social media use. Understanding these dynamics becomes increasingly crucial for promoting responsible and mindful consumer conduct as the digital landscape evolves.

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