



## A Study on Nomophobia, Fear of Missing Out, Emotional regulation among GenZ and Millennials

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**Abstract:** Phones are designed in a way that it keeps us hook engaged into the screens for hours without realizing, the sound of constant notifications makes us feel connected yet unknowingly trapped. For GenZ and Millennials, the boundaries between online and offline is almost blurred, giving rise to nomophobia ( fear of being without phone one's phone ) and fear of missing out. What began as a source of connection has evolved into a cause of anxiety and decreased emotional regulation. The current study aimed to explore the relationship between nomophobia, fear of missing out (FOMO) and emotional regulation among GenZ and Millennials, a total of 60 sample (30 gen z and 30 millennials). The data was collected using standardized scales of nomophobia, fear of missing out and emotional regulation. Significant positive relationship was found between nomophobia and FOMO , expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal, FOMO and expressive suppression. However, nomophobia showed a negative but non-significant correlation with cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. GenZ individuals reported higher nomophobia and fear of missing out than millennials. The study draws attention to lack of boundaries in online and offline world. This highlights the importance of digital detox and mindfulness, particularly for Gen Z, as well as enhancing emotional regulation for both Gen Z and millennials.

**Keywords:** *Nomophobia, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Emotional Regulation, Genz, Millennials*

## 1. Introduction

*“Anybody can become angry- that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way- that is not easy.”*

~Aristotle

Technology once acted as a bridge to convenience and connection, is now erasing the fine line of distinction between aid and addition. From apps that offers food delivery with one tap to the service of virtual companionship offered by AI Bots. As technology expands, people are becoming increasingly dependent on it for decision making, social interaction, and emotional well-being, leading to the vicious problems of Nomophobia, FOMO and Emotion-dysregulation.

Almeida et al. (2022) conducted a study which explored the relationships between night time social media, sleep quality, FOMO, cognitive pre-sleep arousal, and maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation. It included 525 university students, ranging in age from 18 to 64. The results highlighted that worry and FOMO may potentially affect sleep quality and night time social media. A recent study conducted by Dolapoğlu et al. (2025) aimed to explain the relationship between nomophobia, social media addiction, and emotion regulation difficulties in university students. A total of 100 medical school students with an average age of 23 volunteered. The results showed a moderately positive, statistically significant relationship between emotion regulation difficulties, social media addiction, and nomophobia. A joint study was conducted by Oppo and Counterpoint firm, showing that 65% of the smartphone users which were surveyed were suffering from emotional discomfort. New Delhi, May 5 2023 (PTI) claimed that 3 out of every 5 individuals are suffering from Nomophobia.

### 1.1 Nomophobia

Nomophobia is powerful behavior that a person could not go out for a little while without their smartphone as a part of their activities (Anshari et al., 2019; Almunawar et al., 2013).

Vagka et al. (2023) conducted a study to explore the prevalence and factors associated to nomophobia among young adults in Athens, which included 1408 young adults aged 18-25 years. The results showed almost all participants exhibited any level of nomophobia, with the moderate level prevailing. Notara et al. (2021) reviewed the relationship of Nomophobia with psychosocial and physical health among young adults. Research findings highlighted increased psychological, emotional, social and physical side effects due to excessive smartphone use.

Abdoli et al. (2023) investigated 537 students for the association between Nomophobia and symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, insomnia, and obsessive compulsive disorders. The result found that nomophobia shows stronger associations with symptoms of anxiety and, to a lesser extent, with symptoms of depression and stress. On the other hand, nomophobia appeared to be unrelated to insomnia and symptoms of obsessive compulsive disorders.

### **1.2 *Fear of Missing Out***

The fear of missing out (FOMO) is defined “as a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent.” FOMO is characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing (Peplau & Perlman, 1982; Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010; Przybylski et al., 2013)

A study was conducted by Okur et al. (2022) on social media usage habits in the relationship between FOMO and nomophobia. Total 457 samples of participants (age 18 to 70) were taken for this study. Result found out that there is a significant positive correlation between FOMO and nomophobia. The author suggests that individual needs digital detox and should spend more time in natural environment.

Flack et al. (2024) conducted a study on emotion regulation in relation to the links between fear of missing out and problematic internet use in 603 participants. Result revealed that emotional regulation plays an indirect role between FOMO and problematic internet use. The author highlights the need for improving emotional regulation.

Yaseen et al. (2021) studied the role of isolation, FOMO and phubbing among 400 millennials from Multan (Pakistan). The result of the study found out that there is a significant positive relationship between loneliness, FOMO and phubbing. The findings suggest that FOMO and loneliness may lead to phubbing behaviour among millennials.

### **1.3 *Emotional Regulation***

Emotional regulation refers “to how we try to influence which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express these emotions” (Gross, 1998b). Emotional regulation is the process by which activation in one response domain serves to alter, titrate, or modulate activation in another response domain (Dodge, 1989).

Dingle et al. (2017) conducted a study which aimed to examine the individual and interpersonal emotion regulation capacity of 35 adults in residential treatment diagnosed with a substance use disorder (SUD) in comparison to 35 demographically matched controls. The results showed; awareness, expression, and regulation of emotions are particularly difficult for

people with SUD which may maintain their substance abuse and provide an important target for treatment.

Prakash et al. (2015) conducted research which aimed to study the association between mindfulness and emotion dysregulation using thought avoidance, cognitive reappraisal and experiential suppression in 50 older and 50 young adults. The results showed that that thought avoidance but not reappraisal or suppression strategies, partially mediated the association between mindfulness and emotion dysregulation. For young adults, lower mindfulness was associated with greater thought avoidance and resulting in greater emotion dysregulation.

#### **1.4 Purpose**

The purpose is to study Alexithymia, loneliness and internet addiction among young adults.

#### **1.5 Hypothesis**

**H1:** There will be a significant positive relationship between nomophobia and fear of missing out.

**H2:** There will be a significant relationship between nomophobia and emotional regulation.

**H3:** There will be a significant relationship between Fear of missing out and emotional regulation.

**H4:** There will be significant difference between Gen z and millennials on nomophobia and fear of missing out.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Sample**

A total sample of 60 generation Z in the age (18–28) and millennials (29-40) was collected from Rajpura, Punjab, India.

### **2.2 Measures**

**Nomophobia questionnaire (NMPQ):** The NMPQ was used to measure the level of fear or anxiety individuals experience when they are unable to access their mobile phones. The scale was developed by Yildirim and Correia (2015). The scale consisted of 20 items and the likert scale including 1= strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

**Fear of missing out scale:** The fear of missing out was used to measure pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent.

FOMO is characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing. The scale was developed by Przybylski et al. (2013), consisted of 10 items and 5-point Likert scale including 1= not at all true of me 2= slightly true of me 3 = moderately true of me 4= very true of me 5= extremely true for me.

**Emotional regulation questionnaire (short form) EQR-S:** The Emotional Regulation questionnaire short form was used to measure emotional regulation in the study sample. The scale was developed by Preece et al. (2023). The scale consisted of 6 items, and the rating scale included Strongly disagree (1), Neutral (4) and strongly agree (7). The sub-dimensions consisted of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression.

### 2.3 Procedures

For this study 60 sample of (30 Genz, 30 Millennials) were obtained. All the participants were provided with research instruction about the research and its purpose. Data was collected using the google forms and the participants actively cooperated and completed the form.

## 3. Data Analysis

### Results

**Table 1:** *N, Mean and SD*

|                           | Nomophobia | FOMO | Cognitive Reappraisal | Expressive Suppression |
|---------------------------|------------|------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>N</b>                  | 60         | 60   | 60                    | 60                     |
| <b>Mean</b>               | 55.8       | 21.0 | 15.8                  | 15.3                   |
| <b>Standard deviation</b> | 17.2       | 7.22 | 4.34                  | 4.43                   |

**Table 2:** *Correlation*

|                               | Nomophobia | FOMO   | Cognitive Reappraisal | Expressive Suppression |
|-------------------------------|------------|--------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Nomophobia</b>             | —          |        |                       |                        |
| <b>FOMO</b>                   | 0.477***   | —      |                       |                        |
| <b>cognitive Reappraisal</b>  | -0.069     | -0.081 | —                     |                        |
| <b>Expressive Suppression</b> | -0.091     | 0.004  | 0.618***              | —                      |

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

**Table 3: Independent Samples T-Test**

|                               |                    | Statistic | df   | p     |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|------|-------|
| <b>Nomophobia</b>             | <b>Student's t</b> | 2.152     | 58.0 | 0.036 |
| <b>FOMO</b>                   | <b>Student's t</b> | 3.014     | 58.0 | 0.004 |
| <b>cognitive Reappraisal</b>  | <b>Student's t</b> | 0.532     | 58.0 | 0.596 |
| <b>Expressive Suppression</b> | <b>Student's t</b> | 1.380     | 58.0 | 0.173 |

**Table 4: Group Descriptives**

|                               | Group      | N  | Mean | Median | SD    | SE    |
|-------------------------------|------------|----|------|--------|-------|-------|
| <b>Nomophobia</b>             | Gen Z      | 30 | 60.4 | 56.0   | 17.84 | 3.256 |
|                               | Millennial | 30 | 51.2 | 52.5   | 15.43 | 2.817 |
| <b>FOMO</b>                   | Gen Z      | 30 | 23.6 | 23.5   | 6.61  | 1.207 |
|                               | Millennial | 30 | 18.4 | 16.5   | 6.92  | 1.264 |
| <b>Cognitive Reappraisal</b>  | Gen Z      | 30 | 16.1 | 18.0   | 4.59  | 0.838 |
|                               | Millennial | 30 | 15.5 | 16.0   | 4.13  | 0.753 |
| <b>Expressive Suppression</b> | Gen Z      | 30 | 16.1 | 17.5   | 4.46  | 0.815 |
|                               | Millennial | 30 | 14.6 | 15.0   | 4.33  | 0.790 |

#### 4. Discussion of Results

The aim of the study was to assess the relationship and differences between Nomophobia, FOMO and Emotional Regulation (Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression) among Gen Z and Millennials. The findings of the study suggests that there is a significant and positive relationship between Nomophobia and FOMO( $r=.477, p<.001$ ) indicating that individuals with Nomophobia tend to have higher tendency to have FOMO ,leading for the first hypothesis to be accepted. In addition, GenZ individuals were reported with higher Nomophobia ( $t= 2.15$ ) and higher FOMO ( $t= 3.01$ ) in comparison to Millennials accepting the last hypothesis of having a significant difference between Genz and Millennials. The last hypothesis is accepted .Further it was found that correlation with Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression is positive and significant ( $r= 0.618, p<.001$ ) indicating that individuals who frequently try to change how they think about an instance to alter their emotions also tend to suppress their emotions.

Nomophobia has non-significant negative correlation with Cognitive Reappraisal, and Expressive Suppression causing the second hypothesis being rejected. Also, a non-significant correlation was found between FOMO and Cognitive Reappraisal, and FOMO and Expressive

Suppression which leads onto the third hypothesis of a significant relationship between FOMO and emotional regulation being rejected.

Moreover, Gen Z individuals were reported with higher Nomophobia ( $t= 2.15$ ) and higher FOMO ( $t= 3.01$ ) in comparison to Millennials accepting the last hypothesis of having a significant difference between Genz and Millennials.

Joshi (2024) conducted a research consisting of 80 young adults to study the relationship between FOMO and Nomophobia. The results showed positive significant correlation between FOMO and Nomophobia. Study conducted by Cui et al. (2023) investigated how cognitive reappraisal and expressive expression strategies directly and indirectly affect Nomophobia through resilience involving 756 university students. The frequency of expressive suppression strategies directly and positively affected Nomophobia. Büşra Koçyigit and Fulya TÜRK(2025) conducted a research to study the relationship between FOMO and Loneliness among adolescents in the adolescents in the digital age with the mediating roles of Emotion dysregulation and social media addiction. The findings reveals that emotion dysregulation and social media addiction serves as mediating factors in the positive association between loneliness and FOMO among adolescents.\

## **5. Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore the relationship between nomophobia, fear of missing out and emotional regulation among GenZ and millennials, a total of 60 sample (30 Genz and 30 Millennials). The data was collected using standardized scales; Nomophobia questionnaire (NMPQ), Fear of missing out scale and Emotional regulation questionnaire (short form) EQR-S. Significant positive relationship was found between nomophobia and FOMO, expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal, FOMO and expressive suppression. However, nomophobia showed a negative but non-significant correlation with cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Gen z individuals reported higher nomophobia and fear of missing out than millennials.

Nomophobia and FOMO should be addressed, and digital detox and digital mindfulness should be encouraged specially in the Gen Zs by promoting offline engagement activities like hobbies, social groups which would reduce the intensity of these phenomena. Secondly, to improve Emotion Regulation, individuals should be trained to enhance their emotional intelligence and their coping skills to deal with expressive suppression and cognitive

reappraisal. Lastly, group sessions and psychoeducation should be promoted in order to cope with FOMO and nomophobia to maintain healthy digital boundaries.

The study was confined to one cultural background only, causing the results not being generalized to the people of other cultures. In addition, the use of a cross-sectional research design makes it difficult to establish causal relationships between nomophobia, fear of missing out and emotional regulation.

Despite these limitations, the present study has contributed to comprehensive understanding of the relationship between nomophobia, fear of missing out, and emotional regulation. It is anticipated that this research will encourage continued scholarly inquiry into this area.

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