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## FOMO (*FEAR OF MISSING OUT*) – AN EDUCATIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL PROBLEM IN TIMES OF NEW COMMUNICATION FORMS

### FOMO (*FEAR OF MISSING OUT*) – PROBLEMEM EDUKACYJNYM I BEHAWIORALNYM W CZASACH NOWYCH FORM KOMUNIKACJI

#### Keywords:

FOMO, internet addiction, behavioral addictions, social media, smartphones, anxiety, youth

**Summary:** FOMO – the anxiety that we will miss out on something – is a new social problem related to the destructive use of new media. FOMO aroused researchers' interest with the development of the Internet and social networking sites. Indeed, it can be considered as one of the aspects of Internet addiction. People experiencing FOMO want to be up to date and, at the same time, experience anxiety about 1) activities in which their friends participate, 2) information their friends know before they do 3) the purchases of their friends. FOMO can lead to the impression that we are missing out on various satisfying events that others are experiencing. This type of anxiety correlates with low self-esteem, feelings of sadness, envy, symptoms of depression and anxiety, and it worsens concentration and memory, which can have negative consequences for education. FOMO also worsens sleep and can reinforce dangerous driving habits. Research conducted on a sample of 500 Internet users from Poland indicates that 17.6% of the

respondents have a strong indications of FOMO and that it is slightly more intense in respondents under the age of 35 and in women. FOMO symptoms correlate with personality traits and the frequency of unlocking the phone and checking social media on the phone and computer. The article also presents potential solutions to the FOMO problem that can be used in prevention carried out by educators and psychologists. The groups that should be covered by psycho-prevention are youth and young adults.

**Słowa kluczowe:**  
FOMO, uzależnienie od Internetu, uzależnienia behawioralne, media społecznościowe, smartfony, niepokój, młodzież

**Streszczenie:** FOMO, czyli niepokój, że coś nas ominie, jest nowym problemem społecznym związanym z destruktywnym użytkowaniem nowych mediów. Wzbudził zainteresowanie badaczy wraz z rozwojem Internetu i portali społecznościowych. Współcześnie zjawisko to może być uznawane za jeden z aspektów uzależnienia od Internetu. Osoby doświadczające FOMO chcą być na bieżąco, a zarazem doświadczają niepokoju dotyczącego: 1) aktywności, w jakich biorą udział znajomi; 2) informacji, o których dowiedzieli się znajomi przed nimi; 3) zakupów dokonanych przez znajomych. FOMO może prowadzić do wrażenia, że omijają nas różne satysfakcjonujące wydarzenia będące doświadczeniem innych. Ten rodzaj niepokoju koreluje z niską samooceną, uczuciem smutku, zazdrości, objawami depresji, lęku, pogarsza koncentrację i pamięć, co może mieć negatywne konsekwencje dla edukacji. FOMO pogarsza także sen i może sprzyjać niebezpiecznej jeździe samochodem. Przeprowadzone badania własne na próbie 500 polskich użytkowników Internetu wskazują, że 17,6% badanych ma silnie nasilenie FOMO i jest ono nieco bardziej nasilone u osób do 35 roku życia i kobiet. Objawy FOMO korelują z cechami osobowości oraz częstotliwością odblokowywania telefonu i sprawdzania mediów społecznościowych w telefonie i komputerze. W artykule przedstawiono również potencjalne rozwiązania problemu FOMO, które można wykorzystać w działaniach profilaktycznych prowadzonych przez pedagogów i psychologów. Grupy, które powinny być objęte psychoprofilaktyką, to przede wszystkim młodzież i młodzi dorośli.



## Introduction

The phenomenon of FOMO is one of the recent problems that have been noticed due to the increased use of new media. Although computers, tablets and mobile phones have brought many benefits, they have at the same time created new, often previously unknown risks that pose a challenge to school educators and psychologists (Tomczyk, 2018). The phenomenon of FOMO is best explained by an example. Let us imagine sitting at home under a blanket and watching an episode of our favorite series. We take a look at Facebook on the phone, and there, a friend has just posted the latest photo from a party. Suddenly we feel uncomfortable that we have lost something, and the series is no longer interesting. At this point, we start to wonder if we have planned our evening well (Szymczyk, 2019).

FOMO – an acronym for the English words “fear of missing out” – means that we are worried that something will pass us by. It is a real problem that has recently become publicized, especially in journalism, and can significantly increase the amount of stress experienced and reduce life satisfaction. This phenomenon affects an increasing number of people, but some people are more vulnerable to its impact depending on their life cycle – experiencing FOMO can be particularly problematic for the development of children and young people and for the functioning of young adults (Milyavskaya, Saffran, Hope & Koestner, 2018; Scott, 2020).

As defined by Przybylski et al. (2013, p. 1841), FOMO is “a fear that others may have satisfactory experiences that we do not experience on our own.” According to another, more complete definition, FOMO is “a disturbing and absorbing feeling that something is missing: 1) what our peers are doing, 2) what they know, 3) that they have more or something better than us” (Abel, Buff & Burr, 2016, p. 33). In other words, the anxiety that something is missing can relate to activities, experiences, information, having things and purchasing things. People with symptoms of FOMO are characterized by the desire to be constantly associated with what others do, to be up-to-date, and this is the result of the increased transparency in other people’s lives (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Tomczyk, in turn, claims that FOMO “is the phenomenon of triggering states of anxiety due to the inability to participate in spaces where electronic communication is taking place. This state is particularly related to the desire to be up to date with activities undertaken by other Internet users” (Tomczyk,

2018, p. 143). Nowadays, being up to date is mainly achieved in social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and triggers the need for people experiencing FOMO to constantly follow the news created by other users of these media. In Tomczyk's opinion (2018), FOMO can be treated as a kind of addiction to the Internet which appeared with the spread of online media.

Although FOMO is an old phenomenon, as it has almost always existed, it is only since we have the lives of others actually "handed on a plate" – thanks to social networking sites such as Facebook or Instagram – that it has become a more disturbing social phenomenon which requires reflection by teachers, educators and school psychologists.

FOMO, of course, should not be combined only with the desire to "keep up to date." The anxiety that something is missing should be understood from the perspective of psychological well-being, because it refers to the feeling or perception that other people have more positive experiences, more fun, lead better lives or experience better things than we do (Carr, 2009). As a consequence, this anxiety affects self-esteem and can also increase feelings of jealousy and regret for lost moments. This anxiety makes the person experiencing it think of:

- better actions that he could perform at a given moment,
- activities (events, situations) that he is missing out on and that others are now experiencing (Scott, 2020).

FOMO has been studied by representatives of social sciences fairly recently, because it was only in 1996 that Dan Herman conducted his first study on this phenomenon (Herman, 2000). However, with the emergence of social media, FOMO has become more obvious to many of us, with the consequence that researchers and publicists have started to describe and study it more often.

### **FOMO characteristics – conditions and relations with other phenomena**

Social media have accelerated the development of FOMO in several ways. Among others, they create situations in which we compare our "ordinary life" with the best moments in other people's lives. Of course, the people we compare ourselves with do not have to be famous people, but only our friends from work, school or the backyard. Creating a situation of comparison through social media makes us more and more vulnerable to feeling inferior and coping with life worse than others. In other words, our sense of "normality" is at risk (Scott, 2020).

A good example of how social media can spoil the mood is the statement of a patient participating in short-term psychotherapy sessions conducted by the author of this paper, who stated after observing Facebook: “Everyone has organized and interesting lives. And I’ve achieved nothing, I can’t do anything, I just take care of the house.” This statement suggests that more often it is possible to observe the phenomenon of bitterness with one’s own life compared to what others share in social media. Looking at photos of our friends spending time happily without us is something that has not been experienced by previous generations and that people were not aware of before (Scott, 2020).

Comparison is a human tendency, but previously, social contacts were naturally limited, and we could only find out what our friends were doing in face-to-face conversation, via correspondence or on an analog phone, usually with a delay. Limited access to the lives of others could protect us against harmful comparisons with others and more serious consequences for one’s psychological well-being. Since the Internet and social media came into existence, a huge window has opened for their users to others’ lives, and every day Internet users receive a large portion of information about their friends – where they are, with whom they are, what they do, what they have and what they have achieved – and this may intensify social comparisons and the anxiety that something is missing (Fear of missing out, 2017; Wojciszke, 2019).

Social media have created a place to brag – we can show photos of things and events where our happiness can be seen. Browsing such photographs presenting perfect experiences may make some people start to wonder what they are missing out on. It can be seen that social media can both worsen the mood (comparing) and improve (bragging), but the consequence of their abuse can be an addiction to new media as well as increased FOMO (Scott, 2020; Tomczyk, 2018).

The fear of missing out (FOMO) correlates with the multitude of choices, which is, of course, a sign of our times (the so-called paradox of choices). Research shows that having too many choices can lead to decision-making paralysis which both inhibits decision making and undermines psychological well-being. One of the disadvantages of having too many choices is the potential regret resulting from the possibility of making an inappropriate choice. Of course, FOMO is related to this multitude of choices (especially social activities), because by choosing one activity or participation in one event, we risk experiencing anxiety (regret) that we miss another activity or event. Therefore, experiencing FOMO, we are uncertain whether we have made the best

decision and whether we could not spend time in other ways, as well as often feeling sorry for not having chosen other options (Milyavskaya et al., 2018).

Unlike post-decisional regret, which we usually experience some time after making a decision and after thinking that another choice could have been better, FOMO can be experienced despite making a very good, even the best choice for us. In addition, it is experienced more on an ongoing basis, by constantly sending social media messages about our friends' activities. For example, a student, when choosing a movie night in solitude or a date, may still wonder what he is missing, although the activities he has chosen are enjoyable and are likely to be repeated in the near future (Milyavskaya et al., 2018; Zeelenberg, 1999).

Schwartz (2000) believes that post-decisional regret is particularly visible in the young generation in Western society, while at the same time pointing out that today there are no clear guidelines for making meaningful life choices. Traditional authorities are also in crisis, as many researchers have diagnosed (Przybylski et al., 2013). Just as increased levels of post-decisional regret may appear in children, adolescents and young adults, the experience of FOMO may also be increased (Milyavskaya et al., 2018).

The fear of missing out can, of course, also be considered from the perspective of the theory of psychological needs, related to building relationships with others, being in the world, belonging, popularity and autonomy. On the one hand, social media can satisfy these needs, but on the other, it can exacerbate the fear that something will pass us by (Brophy, 2012; Tomczyk, 2018).

In addition to the increase in social comparisons and the existence of a paradox of choices in our times, the following factors have been considered important by FOMO researchers: gender (women may experience it a little more often), loneliness, age (this is mainly the domain of adolescents and young adults), ADHD, co-occurrence of anxiety and depression. From the data presented in the 2016 report of the Supreme Audit Office, it can be concluded that the number of young people who make excessive use of computers, mobile phones and the Internet is increasing, which will obviously be conducive to an increase in the number of people experiencing FOMO (Supreme Audit Office, 2016; Tomczyk, 2018).

The fear of missing out has many negative consequences. Przybylski et al. (2013), studying FOMO with the use of a 10-position scale, found a stable individual difference characteristic of the examined individuals associated with a lower level of self-esteem, reduced mood, lower life satisfaction and higher

use of social media. Subsequent studies found a relation between symptoms of depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, poorer assessment of own physical health, reduced mood and problematic use of social media and mobile phones (Baker, Krieger & LeRoy, 2016; Beyens, Frison & Eggermont, 2016).

Apart from the feeling of regret, which is very unpleasant, the researchers also associate the FOMO phenomenon with increased experience of negative emotions in general, stress and difficulties in self-regulation, such as fatigue due to choosing between different options (one at the expense of others). The literature also points to the negative consequences of experiencing FOMO on sleep. As a result of the awareness that we are missing various positive experiences, sleep may be disturbed due to increased rumination (examining a problem in our minds) and increased levels of stress (Milyavskaya et al., 2018).

Other negative consequences of FOMO can include: difficulty in feeling happy with small things, a decrease in psychological well-being, more frequent experience of sadness, jealousy, addiction to social media, Internet and mobile phones, problems with self-esteem and self-confidence, shopping to keep up with other people, reckless driving (e.g., checking Facebook or answering messages while driving), as well as, particularly interesting for educators, problems with concentration and memory during learning and learning difficulties (Gordon, 2019).

As in the case of careless driving, FOMO makes school and home learning more difficult, as it involves checking social media, commenting on posts or replying to messages. The desire to keep up to date with the activities undertaken by Internet users and the excessive use of technology (computers, mobile phones, websites) forced by this desire may also contribute to procrastination, i.e., the habitual postponement of important educational and academic tasks (Modzelewski, 2018). FOMO correlates with the time devoted to electronic media, which may lead to negative consequences for education, as young people with FOMO syndrome may lack time for what is most important (Tomczyk, 2018).

It was also found that people with FOMO syndrome are characterized by increased alcohol consumption, which is probably due to the fact that good or bad tendencies (habits) are generalized and transferred to other contexts. In its more intense form, FOMO may take the form of quasi-painful symptoms when the need to “be up to date,” impulsively checking social networks to see what we are missing, cannot be realized (Tomczyk, 2008).

The compulsive browsing of the Internet and social networking sites is becoming an unfavorable habit of students and, in the case of adults, employees. Being online all the time not only encourages the use of Internet for educational or commercial purposes, but also enables activities that go beyond typical school, student or employee duties (Verma & Kumari, 2016).

Although Przybylski et al. (2013) associates the FOMO phenomenon primarily with social media, it should be noted that this is a wider issue, although in the current reality of the 21st century, social media is one of its main sources.

A good example of the existence of the FOMO phenomenon before the recent intensive Internet and social media development is this quote: "When I was in fourth grade, I had a FOMO attack. I experienced this when I discovered that all my classmates have Nickelodeon and I don't. They talked about the cartoons and shows they watched the day before" (Dykman, 2012). Therefore, FOMO may concern television and other conventional media. Lack of opportunity to get acquainted with your favorite program, entertainment program, talk show or cyclical event may cause such anxiety. Other examples of FOMO outside the Internet include: inability to attend a concert, a cultural event, being absent during an interesting course or training, or experiencing anxiety that something is missing when we hear the sounds coming from the event when strolling through the university hallway (Milyavskaya et al., 2018; Tomczyk, 2018).

It is worth adding that the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic has also increased the symptoms of FOMO in societies around the world, as people are habitually checking the news about the coronavirus, such as the number of cases or the expected time of a potential vaccine. Some journalists also see the symptoms of FOMO in compulsive purchases during the announcement of a pandemic (Thomas, 2020). This means that fear of missing out has many unrecognized causes and conditions, and can also lead to economic decisions, including stock purchases, that could miss us if we do not hurry. As a result, it can be assumed that this term will be empirically interesting for educators, psychologists and economists alike.

The current focus of researchers on FOMO's relationship with social media seems natural due to the technological development that has affected the way people interact socially, although it should be emphasized that the anxiety that something is missing concerns many situations and contexts without the involvement of social media and the Internet.

## Methodological basis for own research on FOMO

The presented own research was conducted using the CAWI method in May 2019 with the help of the Ankietao.pl portal for researchers, run by the research agency SW Research, on a sample of 500 Polish people (329 women and 171 men). The research is of correlative nature. The respondents included people of different ages, both children and adolescents (the youngest individual respondents were 9–11 years old and the rest at least 15 years old) and seniors (the oldest person was 71 years old). There were 247 respondents up to the age of 35 and 253 over that age (36–71 years). Two age groups were identified in order to determine whether FOMO is rather the domain of young people.

Several research tools were used in this study, the basic tool to diagnose the level of FOMO symptoms was a scale designed by Jessica P. Abel et al. (2016). The FOMO scale consisted of the following items:

1. I impulsively check electronic media when I am with other people.
2. I check what happens in electronic portals whenever I can log in, for example, without any reason.
3. I check social media when I have a job (at school, at work).
4. I check what happens on the Internet when I am alone.

The respondents determined their level of agreement or disagreement with the item using a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability of Cronbach's alpha 4-position scale was 0.71, which is sufficient.

The respondents also completed the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) scale by Gosling, Rentfrow and Swann (2003), in the adaptation by Sorokowska et al. (2014), measuring personality traits according to the Great Five theory (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The survey indicates that TIPI (two items per trait), which takes two minutes to fill in, is an accurate and reliable tool for measuring personality traits in scientific research. TIPI can be used in the form of a traditional questionnaire of the paper and pencil type and in an online form. The respondent is asked to respond to each statement on a 7-level Likert scale, where 1 indicates "I definitely disagree" and 7 indicates "I definitely agree" (Sorokowska, Słowińska, Zbieg & Sorokowski, 2014).

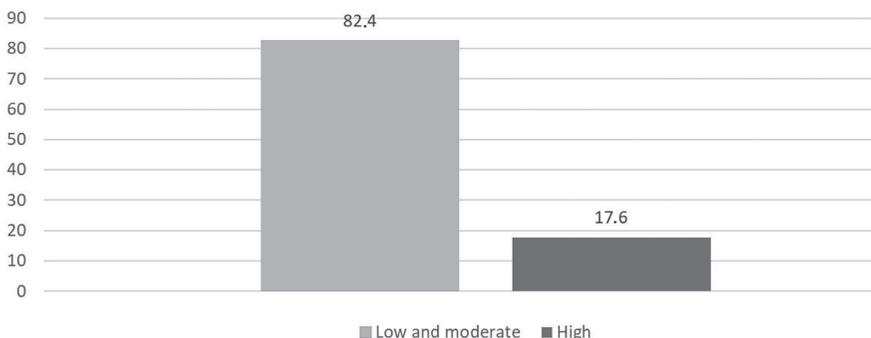
The next part of this survey consisted of answers to questions about specific aspects of FOMO, i.e., whether the respondents are worried when they see interesting activities of their friends, their purchases, or when they see that their friends have found out something before them. This is in line with the

definition of anxiety cited at the beginning of this paper, that something is missing which concerns activity, knowledge or the possession of objects.

In addition, there were survey questions about the frequency of unlocking the phone to check something and checking social media on both the phone and computer. At the end of this survey, the respondents filled in a tag where they were asked about their gender and age.

### FOMO in the light of own research – results

The first step in the analysis was to determine the severity of FOMO symptoms in the examined sample. On the FOMO scale, a minimum of 4 points could be obtained (when the examined person in each of the four positions chose the statement “1 – I absolutely disagree”), and the maximum was 20 points (the examined person each time chose the statement “5 – I absolutely agree”). The average intensity of FOMO level in the examined sample was 11.65 points and the standard deviation was 3.86. Since there are no standards, it was decided to apply a cut-off point from 16 points upwards, which is equivalent to marking each time the phrase “4 – I rather agree” (although, of course, it must be borne in mind that respondents could mark different statements giving a sum of 16 points). The use of cut-off point at the level of 16–20 points was aimed at identifying only those people who are most vulnerable to experiencing this kind of anxiety and at the same time exposed to destructive ways of using devices connected to the Internet.



*Figure 1.*

Symptom severity – percentage of respondents by the severity of FOMO.

Source: own research.

According to the respondents' answers, at least 16 points on the scale were scored by 17.6% of the respondents (88 people out of 500), which indicates a high degree of intense FOMO symptoms. These results are similar to the results of a study conducted by Tomczyk and Selmanagic-Lizde (2018) on a group of 717 students from Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which about 20% of the respondents had FOMO symptoms, and to the results presented in the *FOMO report. The Polish people and the fear of disconnection*, conducted on a representative sample of Polish Internet users, in which 16% of the respondents manifested a high degree of FOMO (Jupowicz-Ginalska et al., 2018). In our own study 82.4% of the respondents (412 people) had low or moderate symptoms at the time of this study.

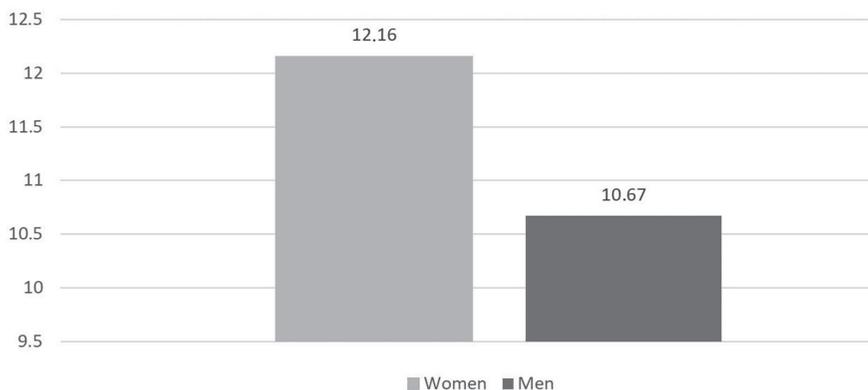


Figure 2.

Difference in the severity of symptoms between genders.

Source: own research.

In order to compare the differences between genders a Student's t-test was conducted. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the examined women significantly differed from the examined men in terms of FOMO symptoms, showing a higher level [ $t(314.19) = 4.03, p < 0.001$ ]. The strength of the effect of gender for FOMO symptoms can be described as low ( $d$  Cohen = 0.38). On average, women differed by almost 1.5 points on the FOMO scale from men, as shown in Figure 2. This may be due to the fact that women tend to be a little more communicative, social or more communal, which is also reflected in online communication (Wojciszke, 2010).

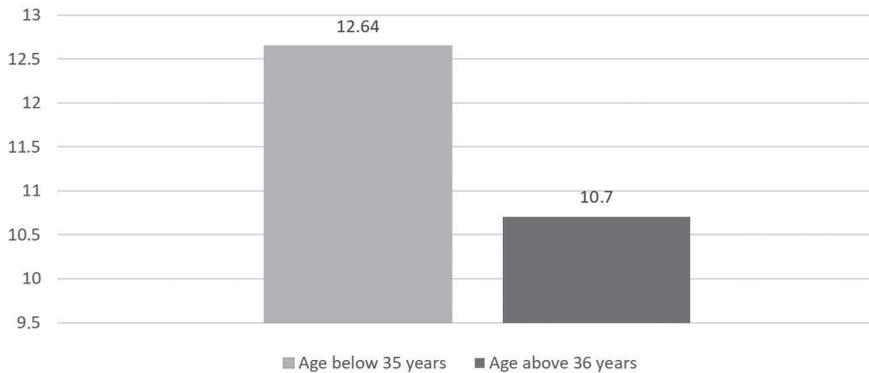


Figure 3.

Difference in severity of symptoms according to age.

Source: own research.

Similarly, a Student's t-test was conducted to identify differences between people of different ages. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that respondents up to the age of 35 differed significantly from respondents aged 36–71 years in terms of FOMO, showing a higher level of symptom severity [ $t(498) = 5.80, p < 0.001$ ]. The strength of the age effect is moderate ( $d$  Cohen = 0.52). On average, people under 35 years of age differ by almost 2 points in the FOMO scale from older people.

Table 1

*FOMO correlations with personality traits*

		Emotional stability	Conscientiousness
FOMO	Pearson correlation	-0.21**	-0.12**

\*\* The correlation is significant at 0.01 (bilaterally).

Source: own research.

Analyzing the relation between FOMO symptoms and personality traits, a correlation was found with two traits, i.e., emotional stability (the opposite is neuroticism) and conscientiousness, which is responsible for perseverance in achieving goals. On the basis of studies, it can be concluded that the less emotionally stable ( $r = -0.21, p < 0.01$ ) and less conscientious ( $r = -0.12, p < 0.01$ ) a person is, the more anxiety he or she may experience that something

will pass him or her by. Correlations between FOMO and personality traits are low and negative.

Table 2

*FOMO correlations with specific anxiety – “I’m worried that my friends...”*

		do something that I don't do	bought something that I don't have	hear about some- thing before me
FOMO	Pearson correlation	0.60**	0.51**	0.54**

\*\* The correlation is significant at 0.01 (bilaterally).

Source: own research.

Table 2 presents research results on specific aspects of FOMO. It was interesting to find out what the respondents were most concerned about. For this purpose, the results on the FOMO scale were correlated with the following survey questions: “When using social media, I am anxious: 1) when I see my friends or peers doing something that I don’t do; 2) when I see my friends or peers buying something that I don’t have; 3) when I see my friends or peers finding out about something before me.” The relation between symptoms of FOMO and specific anxieties (about the pleasant activities of others, their purchases or knowledge, or the information they have) was moderate and positive, thus the higher the intensity of anxiety that something is missing out, the greater the worries about particular aspects of FOMO. These correlations were close to the level, with the most frequent anxiety being related to the observed activities of other people which the respondents currently did not undertake ( $r = 0.60$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The more often we check electronic (social) media, the more anxious we are that others are doing something that we are not.

Table 3

*FOMO correlations with phone and social media check frequency*

		Frequency of un- locking the phone to check something	Frequency of check- ing social media on the phone	Frequency of checking social media on the computer
FOMO	Pearson correlation	0.53**	0.45**	0.29**

\*\* The correlation is significant at 0.01 (bilaterally).

Source: own research.

The correlation also shows that FOMO is associated with checking the means of communication (in this case the phone) and checking social media both on a phone and computer, although the dominant medium conducive to FOMO symptoms is the phone. The frequency of unlocking the phone to check something correlated moderately with FOMO ( $r = 0.53, p < 0.01$ ), and the frequency of checking social media on the phone was also moderately correlated with FOMO ( $r = 0.45, p < 0.01$ ), while the frequency of checking social media using a computer correlated with this type of anxiety to a low degree ( $r = 0.29, p < 0.01$ ). Such research results are not surprising, as today a mobile phone often replaces a computer and is the main means of communication with the Internet. The most interesting result here is the one that can be seen in the first column of Table 3 – people experiencing fear of missing out more often unlock their phone to check something. Of course, the dependency may also be reversed, the more often we check (merely unlock) the phone, the stronger the FOMO.

Table 4  
*FOMO as a function of phone check frequency – model for FOMO*

Model		Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	Significance
		B	Standard error	Beta		
1	(Fixed)	7.03	0.36		19.43	0.00
	Frequency of unlocking the phone to check something	2.87	0.20	0.53	13.98	0.00

Dependent variable: FOMO

Source: own research.

Regression analysis (progressive selection method) was used to determine the best FOMO predictors. Five predictors were included in the analysis, such as conscientiousness, emotional stability, frequency of unlocking the phone and frequency of checking social media on the phone and computer. The statistical program proposed three models, with only one explaining most of the variability in FOMO. The best predictor of FOMO is the frequency of unlocking the phone to check something, which explains 28% of the volatility in terms of anxiety that something will pass us by (R-square = 0.28). The more often you

unlock the phone, the more often you experience FOMO, as indicated by the Beta factor. Other theoretical models with additional predictors – 1) frequency of checking social media on the phone; and 2) frequency of checking social media on the phone and emotional stability – explained only 2% and 4% more variance (30 and 32% of variance, respectively). In conclusion, it can be stated that the mere frequent unblocking of the phone (to check something) contributes to the development of symptoms of anxiety of missing out on something. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to persuade people to hang up their phone, use it less often, sometimes switch it to an offline (e.g., airplane) mode. The less often we check the phone by simply unlocking it, the better, because we have lower symptoms of FOMO.

### **Discussion. Practical conclusions on the minimization of the FOMO problem**

Summing up the theoretical deliberations and empirical research conducted so far, it can be seen that a significant percentage of people check electronic media when they are with others, during their activities (at school or at work), without any reason or when they feel lonely. As many as 17.6% of people do not like to be offline and are afraid that they will miss out on something. Research shows that FOMO is a bit more of a problem for young people (up to 35 years) and women. These results are probably due to more time spent using electronic media by young people and a slightly stronger attitude towards communication and community by women.

FOMO is also related to personality traits. The less emotionally stable and less conscientious a person is, the more experiences of the kind of fear analyzed here. Higher perseverance and emotional stability are in turn minor indicators of FOMO. Unfortunately, personality is quite stable over time, and therefore the potential for reducing FOMO should be directed at the development of perseverance and emotional control or stress management in the long term.

It is worth emphasizing that FOMO is not only a desire to be up to date, but also a real anxiety about the activities and events that friends take part in, the news and information they have found out about before us and their purchases. The respondents see in the social media that these events, shopping and news are missing in their lives, which can possibly cause the feelings of low self-esteem mentioned in the theoretical part, worse coping with life and feelings of sadness or even jealousy when we see our friends have something that we do not at the moment.

The study concludes that FOMO is associated with the frequency of unlocking the phone to check something, as well as checking social media on the phone and computer. However, it is particularly noteworthy that reaching for the phone to unlock it and check something is already an important predictor of FOMO (as the regression analysis has shown). In conducting psychopedagogical prevention, on the basis of conclusions from this study, it can be recommended to others (especially students) to introduce periods without a phone during the day and, at the same time, control the time spent with the phone and the number of unlocks, which is possible thanks to special applications teaching digital balance. Future research on FOMO could be based on a larger (representative) sample and use more advanced statistical models, including more sociodemographic and psychological data. It is possible that people with FOMO have other interesting characteristics.

It seems that as far as the initial solutions for FOMO prevention and therapy are concerned, the already mentioned control of time spent on the Internet and social media through the support of addiction blocking applications and websites and hanging up reminders may be most effective. Various types of therapies can also be helpful, such as those which teach one to be here and now, to enjoy the moment, to accept (e.g., that sometimes others have a pleasant experience and we do not) and at the same time improve our own life – e.g., Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) – and the increasingly popular mindfulness. It can be potentially useful to develop an attitude of gratitude, for instance, by writing a diary of events and things for which we are grateful, so that we appreciate the good things in our lives. Through such diary exercises, those who show symptoms of FOMO will focus more on their own positive experiences rather than the events, purchases and information that are experienced by others. Similarly, philosophies like the Danish Hygge can effectively teach people to enjoy the little things that make up normal human life (Gordon, 2019; Scott, 2020). Treating FOMO as a social and educational challenge, it is worth developing among young people the knowledge that impulsive, uncritical, addictive use of modern electronic devices can lead to habits that are difficult to eliminate and undermine psychological well-being and functioning in school, university or at work (Stośić & Stośić, 2015).

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