Fear of Missing Out, Grit and Resilience among College Students in Kerala

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Abstract: The present study was conducted to examine the interrelationship between fear of missing out, grit and resilience among college students in Kerala and to compare their mean differences on fear of missing out and grit based on resilience levels. The participants for the present study consisted of 180 college students, who were drawn from 3 districts in Kerala by means of a stratified random sampling technique. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years. The Fear of Missing Out Scale. The Grit-O scale and The Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire were used for assessment. Data were analysed using Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis, one-way ANOVA and Duncan's multiple range post-hoc analysis. The results revealed the existence of a significant positive relationship between grit and resilience of the participants. The results also revealed the existence of a significant difference on the grit level of the participants across the groups based on resilience. The developing resilience group shows a significant difference between strong and exceptional resilience groups; both the established and strong resilience group shows a significant difference from the exceptional resilience group. There is no statistically significant difference between developing and established resilience groups and established and strong resilience groups. The findings derived from the present study are an eye-opener on the relationship between grit and resilience. FoMO's significance in these findings lies in its potential to disrupt focus and emotional stability, which are vital for maintaining grit. Greater resilience in strong and exceptional groups may help buffer against FoMO's distractions, allowing students to stay goal-oriented. This study demands the need for the development of an intervention package which addresses the enhancement of resilience to develop perseverance to overcome obstacles or challenges that lie on the path to accomplishment and serves as a driving force in achievement realisation.

Keywords: FoMO, Fear of missing out, Grit, Resilience, College Students, Psychology

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about drastic changes in the social functioning and psychological well-being of individuals. Protracted period of isolation, disturbed academic routines and highly restricted face to face interactions affected all individuals particularly students and young adults (Ronen, 2021). Digital gadgets and technologies have thus become the inevitable tools for people to be connected with others and a source of information and entertainment. However, the overdependence of digital gadgets and internet exposure have amplified the concern over its harmful psychological consequences. One of such consequences is the heightened experience of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), which refers to the pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent (Przybylski, 2013).

In the digital age, fear of missing out (FoMO) has become an important psychological concept and has been shown to predict a variety of maladaptive outcomes. Studies have found that the more severe the fear of missing out, the more likely people are to be addicted to social media (Przybylski, 2013), score lower on mood and life satisfaction scales (Weinstein, 2017), and are more likely to feel tired and stressed, and even engage in risky behaviors such as drinking (Markham, 2018). In the academic world, FoMO is related to the decline in academic performance, reduced attention, and technology-related distractions such as "phubbing" and late-night social media use (Azizi, 2019). A recent large-scale study carried out on Chinese college students further suggests FoMO to have an adverse effect on learning engagement and proposes that self-control can buffer this effect, indicating the importance of personal strengths to lessen the academic consequences of FoMO (Kong, 2024). These patterns were intensified during the pandemic, where fear of exclusion and digital overexposure intersected to challenge the mental resilience of students (Przybylski, 2013; Satici, 2020).

During and after the pandemic, the shift to digital learning and increased online interactions heightened students' exposure to the curated lives of their peers, which in turn intensified feelings of exclusion and comparison. Although fear of missing out (FoMO) can result in impulsive social media checking and emotional distress, individual traits such as grit and resilience may serve as protective factors, mitigating the negative impact of FoMO on mental health. Two constructs—grit and resilience—have gained significant empirical attention in recent years. Grit, defined by Duckworth et al. (2007) as perseverance and passion for long-term goals, has been known to lead towards higher academic achievement, emotional stability, and reduced career instability (Britto , 2023; Duckworth, 2007). It reflects the sustainment of interest and effort toward goals over time despite failures, changes in circumstances, and plateaus in progress. From an educational point of view, gritty individuals are better prepared to cope with setbacks and focus on their goals and self-regulated, learning-oriented behaviours (Duckworth, 2007). Supporting this, Chen et al. (2024) suggested that students with higher grit levels encountered only smaller declines in academic performance during the pandemic, emphasising that grit was a firm factor in sustaining achievement under prolonged stress.

On the contrary, Resilience refers to an individual's capacity to recover and adapt successfully to adversity or significant stress. It encompasses emotional regulation, problem-solving, and the ability to maintain a sense of purpose and connection despite life's challenges. (Guerrini, 2021). Academic resilience specifically highlights the ability of students to perform well despite socioeconomic or personal hardships (Schaefer, 2013). Several studies have underlined resilience as a factor that protects against anxiety, depression, and burnout during the pandemic (Ronen, 2021; Guerrini, 2021).

Regardless of these insights, few empirical studies have examined the interplay between FoMO, grit, and resilience, particularly within the unique sociocultural context of post-pandemic student populations in India. As digital connectedness continues to change social behaviour, understanding how individual differences in grit and resilience influence vulnerability to FoMO becomes critically relevant. This relationship is particularly important during emerging adulthood, defined by identity exploration, emotional instability, and increased reliance on peer validation (Ronen, 2021). An increased reliance on peer validation further intensifies the desire for connection, rendering individuals more susceptible to the FoMO (Ronen, 2021). Nevertheless, resilience can aid in managing emotional instability, while grit fosters sustained goal pursuit in the face of social distractions. Together, these qualities can help alleviate the negative effects of FoMO during this fundamental developmental stage (Duckworth, 2007; Smith, 2008).

While the detrimental effects of FoMO on well-being and academic functioning are increasingly recognised, relatively limited research has explored how positive psychological characteristics like grit and resilience can moderate or buffer against such effects, specifically within the Indian student population. Following a global pandemic that increased reliance on social media and intensified digital exhaustion, there is a need to understand the safety mechanisms that can protect students from the perils of living in a hyper-connected world without falling into psychological distress. This study, therefore, addresses the gap by exploring the interrelations

among FoMO, grit, and resilience, and examining how these factors collectively influence student adjustment and well-being in the post-pandemic era.

1.1: Objectives

1. To assess the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Grit and Resilience among college students.
2. To examine the interrelationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Grit and Resilience among college students.
3. To assess the mean difference on FoMO and Grit based on the resilience level of the participants.

1.2. Hypothesis

1. There will be a significant interrelation between FOMO, grit, and resilience among the participants.
2. At least one of the groups based on resilience will show a significant difference in the FOMO levels of the participants.
3. At least one of the groups based on resilience will show a significant difference in the grit levels of the participants.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

The present study was carried out using a descriptive research design. The sample from the present study was drawn from the population of college students consisted of 90 males and 90 females, by means of stratified random sampling from Kollam, Thiruvananthapuram and Pathanamthitta districts in Kerala. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years. Participants who are students of any of the undergraduate or post-graduate programme, who can speak and write English / Malayalam (The official language of Kerala) and who are reported to have no physical or psychological illness for the past 1 year were selected for the study.

2.2. Measures

Three psychological measures were used in this study in order to assess the fear of missing out, grit and resilience of the participants.

The Fear of Missing Out Scale, devised by Przybylski, et al., (2013) was used to assess the fear of missing out level of the participants. It is a 10-item unidimensional scale set on 5-point Likert-type responses, and measures the degree to which one fears missing out on social events, involving their friends and often, using social media to stay (hyper) connected. The total score of the FoMO was calculated by summing the responses to all 10 items and dividing by 10 to obtain an individual score. The minimum possible score is 1, and the maximum is 5. The higher score indicated higher levels of FoMO. The scale forms a reliable composite measure (α = .87 to .90) and has been shown to demonstrate high internal consistency of 0.82 (Przybylski, 2013). Subsequent studies have continued to verify the scales' reliability (α = 0.87, 0.90; Lai, 2016). In terms of face validity, the measure features items including anxiety from being left out of 'inside jokes' or social events, which seem to encapsulate the construct well.

The Grit-O scale (Duckworth, 2007), comprised of 12 items, was used to assess the participants' Grit. The scale assesses both perseverance of effort and consistency in interest in a self-report manner. The response to each item was given on a 5-point Likert scale. The maximum score that could be obtained on this scale is 5. The higher score indicated higher levels of grit. The scale has acceptable levels of internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84.

The Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire (Nicholson, 2010) is a 12-item measure on resilience. The response of the participants was collected on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The maximum score that can be obtained in this scale is 60, scores 0-37 indicate a developing level of resilience, scores 38-43 indicate an established level of resilience, scores 44-48 indicate a strong level of

resilience and scores 49-60 indicate an exceptional level of resilience. The reliability estimated by Cronbach's Alpha = .76.

Personal and demographic data were collected using a socio-demographic data sheet from each of the participants.

2.3. Procedure

The tests were administered in group settings to the sample, and they were provided with the instructions given in the test manuals. Scoring was done through the guidelines given in the manuals.

2.4. Statistical Analysis

Data obtained from the participants were statistically analysed using SPSS. Pearson's product-moment correlational analysis was performed to assess the significant relationship between the study variables. Independent sample t' t-test was used to compare the mean difference on fear of missing out, grit and resilience level between the male and female college students. One-way Analysis of variance followed by Duncan's multiple range post hoc analysis, was used to assess the significant difference on FOMO and grit between the groups of participants based on their resilience levels.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to assess, examine the interrelationship between fear of missing out, grit and resilience of the college students and to examine the mean difference on fear of missing out and grit of the participants based on the resilience level.

Participants of the study were aged between 18 and 25 years. FOMO scores of the male participants ranged from 11 to 39 (M = 24.18, SD = 6.45) and that of female participants ranged from 10 to 40 (M = 23.73, SD= 5.72). The score obtained by the male participants for Grit ranged from 24 to 53 (M = 38.32, SD = 7.30) and the score of the female participants ranged from 22 to 54 (M = 37.36. SD = 6.16). And for the last variable, which is Resilience, the scores obtained by the male participants ranged between 30 to 54 (M = 42.05, SD = 5.62) and that of female participants ranged between 30 to 53 (M = 40.72, SD = 5.06).

The study tested the significance of three hypotheses. In order to test the hypotheses, Pearson product-moment correlational analysis and one-way analysis of variance, followed by Duncan's multiple range post hoc analysis, were used. The alpha level was set at $p < .05$ for all the analyses.

Table 1: The correlation coefficients of the study variables among the participants: Results of Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Analysis. ($N = 180$)

No	Variable	1	2	3
1	FOMO	( )	-.062	-.088
2	Grit		( )	.431**
3	Resilience			( )

*** Significant at 0.01 level*

The first hypothesis verified the existence of any significant relationship between levels of fear of missing out, grit and resilience of the participants, stating "there will be a significant interrelation between FOMO, grit, and resilience among the participants.". Table 1 portrays the interrelation between the study variables. While observing the results that emerged from the present study, it is clear that there exists a statistically significant direct relationship between the level of grit and resilience of the college students, r (180) = 0.43, p = < 0.01, suggesting that the college students who exhibit higher levels of grit also tend to possess greater resilience and vice versa.

The findings from the present study are in line with previous research findings, which indicate the existence of a significant relationship between Grit personalities and resilience and can predict an individual's resilience (Mustaza, 2022). The relationship between grit and resilience can be attributed to the gritty individuals' persistent efforts and commitment that equip them to face challenges and recover more effectively from setbacks. Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) found that individuals high in grit were more likely to succeed in demanding environments, partly due to their ability to remain committed despite difficulties, an ability closely related to resilience.

The results emerged from the present study failed to reveal any further significant relationship between FOMO and Grit, $r = -.062$ or FoMO and Resilience, $r = -.088$. These findings suggest that the tendency to experience FoMO is not meaningfully associated with grit or resilience among college students.

Table 2: Comparison of FOMO and Grit in relation to resilience.

Sl No	Variable	Source	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	F ratio
1	FOMO	Between Group	130.32	3	43.44	1.21
		Within Group	6256.24	176	35.95	
		Total	6386.56	179		
2	Grit	Between Group	1433.45	3	477.81	13.1**
		Within Group	6346.66	176	36.47	
		Total	7780.11	179		

** Significant at 0.01 level

The second hypothesis examined the mean difference on fear of missing out based on the level of resilience, stating that "at least one of the groups based on resilience will show a significant difference in the FOMO levels of the participants". Table 2 indicates that the results emerged from the present study failed to reveal any statistically significant difference on FoMO scores between the resilience groups, $F(3, 176) = 1.21$, $p > .05$. These findings suggest that resilience levels did not significantly impact the experience of FOMO among the participants.

These findings suggest that resilience may not play a prominent role in moderating FOMO experiences in this cultural context. Several cultural and contextual explanations may underlie this finding. First, collectivistic culture in India emphasises interdependence, social harmony, and communal belonging (Hofstede, 2001). As a result, FOMO in Indian students may be more rooted in social connectedness norms than in individual emotional regulation capabilities like resilience. That is, even highly resilient individuals might still feel FOMO due to perceived obligations to stay socially integrated or avoid missing group events, which are culturally reinforced (Alt, 2015).

In addition to that Patani and Babu (2020) found that rather than personal inadequacy or lack of emotional strength, Indian students experience FoMO particularly due to peer influence and digital exposure. This aligns with the findings of Przybylski et al. (2013), who conceptualise FoMO as a social-driven phenomenon characterised by need deficits in autonomy and relatedness. In the Indian context, the drive to belong and connect may dominate the cushioning effect of resilience.

Another possible reason could be the homogeneous nature of digital culture among Indian youth. With prevalent smartphone use and pervasive access to the internet, especially social media, students from all resilience levels are equally exposed to digital content that triggers FoMO. Therefore, external exposure, rather than internal traits like resilience, might be the dominant factor influencing FOMO in this demographic.

Table 3: Duncan Multiple Range Post Hoc Analysis Results of Grit across the groups based on the resilience of the participants.

Sl No	Resilience Group	N	M	Group			
				1	2	3	4
1	Developing	44	35.20	( )	-	*	*
2	Established	56	36.90		( )	-	*
3	Strong	38	38.27			( )	*
4	Exceptional	42	44.77				( )

* Significant difference between the groups.

The third hypothesis assessed the mean difference on grit based on the different levels of resilience, stating "at least one of the groups based on resilience will show a significant difference in the grit levels of the participants". The results emerged from the present study revealed the existence of a significant difference on grit based on the resilience levels of the participants $F(3, 176) = 13.1$, $p < .01$. To further explore these differences, the Duncan multiple range post hoc test was conducted. The results (Table 3) demonstrated that participants in the exceptional resilience group reported significantly higher grit levels ($M = 44.77$) compared to all other groups. Additionally, significant differences were observed between the developing group and both the strong and exceptional resilience groups, as well as between the established and exceptional groups. However, no statistically significant differences were found between the developing and established groups, or between the established and strong groups. These findings suggest a graded relationship between resilience and grit, particularly pronounced at the highest levels of resilience.

The present results align with existing theoretical and empirical frameworks that rank resilience as a fundamental trait for the growth of grit. Resilience, defined as the capacity to "bounce back" from adversity and negative emotional experiences (Tugade, 2004), acts as a psychological buffer that facilitates individuals to sustain goal-directed behaviours. Participants having exceptional resilience are likely to possess higher emotional coping skills, adaptive skills and greater perseverance, which are considered as the core elements that contribute factors of the development of grit (Duckworth, 2007). The ability to remain goal-focused even in the middle of challenges likely facilitates their sustained commitment to long-term objectives.

The present findings should be more meaningful considering that within the context of Indian culture. Indian society places a major importance on perseverance, academic achievement and familial roles, which are the elements that encourage grit-like behaviours across all resilience levels (Kumar, 2013). In such a setting, even individuals with lower or moderate resilience may demonstrate outward signs of grit due to external motivational pressures, such as parental expectations, societal norms, and communal identity. This could explain why significant differences were not observed between adjacent resilience groups (e.g., developing vs. established), as grit may be a culturally reinforced behaviour, not solely the product of individual emotional traits.

In addition to that, in Indian culture, family, peers and community act as a support system which can supplement the emotional coping resources and help to sustain efforts in a longer period even in the absence of intrinsic resilience (Singh, 2010; Patel, 2007). The cultural mechanisms may compensate for the psychological distinctions between the transitional resilience levels, allowing individuals with developing or established resilience levels to still exhibit relatively high grit.

4. CONCLUSION

The study conducted among college students in Kerala revealed a notable positive correlation between grit and resilience. This implies that those who can effectively bounce back from challenges are more likely to exhibit persistent passion and determination towards their long-term objectives. Furthermore, college students possessing higher levels of resilience also tend to exhibit significantly better grit scores, indicating the interconnectedness of these two psychological traits. However, the research failed to reveal any significant difference on FoMO based on the resilience levels, suggesting that resilience may not directly alleviate FoMO, which may be more affected by external social and technological influences.

The findings of the present study happen to be quite an eye-opener for educational institutions and mental health professionals, emphasising the need to design interventions that foster grit and resilience to support academic and personal success (WeiE, 2017). Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its geographic scope and its exclusive focus on college students. Future research should expand the demographic and geographic sample, incorporate additional psychological variables (e.g., self-esteem, well-being), and explore the effects of grit, resilience, and FoMO on functional outcomes like academic performance. Experimental or longitudinal designs, including interventions, may offer deeper insight into how these constructs interact and develop over time in diverse Indian populations.

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