The Mediating Effect of Fear of Missing Out between Interpersonal Relationship Orientation and SNS Addiction Tendency in College Students

Jeang-Nam Kim

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the mediating effect of fear of missing out between interpersonal relationship orientation and SNS addiction tendency of college students. For this purpose, we surveyed 210 college students in Busan from September 3 to September 22, 2018 for 20 days. And 205 responses were used for the analysis. As a result of correlation analysis for examine the relationship between the variables, interpersonal relationship orientation showed static correlation with fear of missing out \( r=0.304, p<0.001 \) and SNS addiction tendency \( r=0.401, p<0.001 \). Also, SNS addiction tendency showed static correlation with fear of missing out \( r=0.368, p<0.001 \). Therefore, we can assume the mediating effect of fear of missing out between interpersonal relationship orientation and SNS addiction tendency. In order to verify the mediating effect of interpersonal relationship orientation and SNS addiction tendency, the three step mediating effect validation process proposed by showed a partial mediating effect. The Sobel test was used to verify the significance of the mediation effect. The result showed statistical significance as \( Z=3.545 \) \( p<0.001 \). The implications and limitations of this study are discussed including suggestions for future research.

Keywords: College Student, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Interpersonal Relationship Orientation, Mediating effect, SNS Addiction Tendency

1. Introduction

The spread of smartphone (a computer in your hand) and the network development such as Wi-Fi and LTE (Long Term Evolution) have contributed to a rapid increase in SNS (Social Network Service) users. According to 2018 Korean Media Panel Survey[1], Smartphone users have increased from 21.6% in 2011 to 82.7% in 2018. In particular, 82.1% users with ages ranging between 18 and 24 have access to SNS, the highest percentage compared to other age groups. The increased use of SNS have resulted in SNS addiction, bringing about psycho-social issues. Therefore, now is the time to pay attention to the young in their 20s who show the

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highest volume among SNS users.

SNS helps to build relationships with others in the virtual space and to get back immediate feedback, making it easier for young adulthood to be addicted[2-4]. In particular, college students are sensitive to friendship or responses from their friends and that could increase the possibility of SNS addiction[5]. [6] reported that 55.1% of college students become addicted to SNS. Under these circumstances, it is necessary to look at ways of how psychological factors among college students affect SNS addiction tendency.

One of psychological factors tied to SNS addiction tendency could be interpersonal relationship orientation. People high in interpersonal relationship orientation tend to put emphasis on mutual relations with others and put excessive energy and time for stable and positive relations with others[7]. So, SNS could become a tool for communication to them and then it is necessary to look at ways how interpersonal relationship orientation influences SNS addiction tendency. People high in interpersonal relationship orientation could establish selective relationships and avoid unwanted relationships. They also prefer to use SNS where they can show their positive aspects. People who feel anxiety and fear in their face-to-face communication prefer to interact with others in online and virtual world settings[8]. Difficulties in interpersonal relationships could lead to the excessive use of SNS as avoidance reaction and social compensation, possibly resulting in addiction[9-11]. Previous studies reveal that interpersonal relationship orientation shows static correlation with SNS addiction[12]. It is reported that high orientation in interpersonal relationship could lead to more use of SNS, possibly resulting in high tendency in SNS addiction[13].

Major predisposing factors influencing SNS addiction tendency include such as fear of missing out[14-16]. Fear of missing out(FoMO) refers to the status where one is very sensitive to other’s situation or information and feel anxiety due to concerns over being missed out[17]. It’s a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent. This type of social anxiety is characterized by a desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing[17][18]. FoMO has triggered the use of SNS and then social media addiction has worsened FoMO[19]. Since college students stay frequently connected to SNS, search for information on fashion and try to engage in their friends in order to reduce FoMO, it is reported that their addiction to social media has gone up[14][20].

As painful clients due to their addiction to social media have increased in the counseling field, it is required to study psychological factors which influence SNS addiction tendency. Existing studies examine how interpersonal relationship orientation and FoMO influence social media addiction tendency respectively. However, structural relations among them have not been
studied. The purpose of this study is to identify the mediating effect of fear of missing out between interpersonal relationship orientation and SNS addiction tendency. The result could be used as a basis for preventing SNS addiction tendency and counseling therapy.

2. Study Method

2.1 Study Participants

With the use of convenience sampling, the survey was conducted for four-year-course college students without distinction of school years in Busan Metropolitan City in order to figure out the mediating effect of FoMO between interpersonal relationship orientation and SNS addiction tendency. The survey period was 20 days ranging from Sep 3 to Sep 22 in 2018. A total of 210 questionnaires were distributed and collected. Except for 5 questionnaires with incomplete or non-response ones, 205 copies were analyzed. [Table 1] shows the demographic distribution of participants.

[Table 1] Demographic Distribution of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-22</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-24</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 or more</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>205</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Tool

2.2.1 The Scale of Relationship Orientation

The revised Personal Style Inventory (PSI-II) was adopted to measure the interpersonal relationship orientation among college students. The PSI-II is a tool developed by [21] after complementing the SAS (Sociotropy-Autonomy Scale) developed by [22]. For this study, the one used by [14] was adopted. This scale consists of 48 questionnaires including 24 for interpersonal relationship orientation and 24 for autonomy orientation. This study uses only 24 questionnaires for interpersonal relationship orientation for measurement. The internal consistency reliability of interpersonal relationship orientation (Cronbach’s α) was .85. The internal consistency reliability of this study was .90.
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2.2.2 The Scale of Korean-style FoMO

The Fear of Missing Out scale (FoMO scale) developed by [23] was adapted and verified by [14] as a Korean-style scale. The scale was adopted. With a 5-point Likert scale, 8 questionnaires are composed of belonging need (2), external motive (4), relative deprivation (2). In the previous study by [14], the internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s α) of three factors is as follows; belonging need .72, extrinsic motivation .69, relative deprivation .77. In this study, the internal consistency reliability is as follows; belonging need .75, extrinsic motivation .70, relative deprivation .73.

2.2.3 Social Networking Service Addiction Tendency

The adopted scale of SNS addiction tendency was the one which was developed by [24] and complemented by [25] and used by [14]. The scale is composed of three sub factors such as SNS obsession, withdrawal symptom, excessive disturbance and immersion in SNS as well as excessive time consumption for SNS. The internal consistency reliability of the research studied by [14] (Cronbach’s α) was .88. The internal consistency reliability of this study was .92.

3. Study Result

3.1 Correlation Result between Major Variables

In order to figure out relations between interpersonal relationship orientation, FoMO and SNS addiction tendency, correlation was analyzed. [Table 2] shows the result.

[Table 2] Correlation Analysis between Major Variables (n=205)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Interpersonal relationship orientation</th>
<th>FoMO</th>
<th>SNS addiction tendency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relationship orientation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FoMO</td>
<td>.304***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNS addiction tendency</td>
<td>.401***</td>
<td>.368***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean(M)</td>
<td>70.10</td>
<td>19.16</td>
<td>41.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation (SD)</td>
<td>13.55</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>12.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** P<.01, *** P<.001
According to [Table 2], interpersonal relationship orientation shows a high static correlation with FoMO (r=.304, p<.001) and SNS addiction tendency(r=.401, p<.001). SNS addiction tendency shows a high static correlation with FoMO(r=.368, p<.001). So, it can be assumed that FoMO has the mediating effect between interpersonal relationship orientation and SNS addiction tendency.

### 3.2 Verification on the Mediating Effect of Fear of Missing Out between Interpersonal Relationship Orientation and SNS Addiction Tendency

In order to verify the mediating effect of FoMO between interpersonal relationship orientation and SNS addiction tendency, the three-step verification processes on the mediating effect presented by [26] were gone through. [Table 3] shows the result.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>FoMO</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>4.555</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>20.746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>SNS addiction</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>6.242</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td>38.968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tendency</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>SNS addiction</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>4.913</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>29.723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tendency</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FoMO</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>4.164</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<.01 , *** p<.001

At step 1, a simple regression analysis is conducted to figure out whether interpersonal relationship orientation, which is an independent variable, has a significant effect on FoMO, which is a mediating variable. It is revealed that interpersonal relationship orientation has a significant effect on FoMO (β=.304, t=4.555, p<.001).

At step 2, a simple regression analysis is conducted to figure out whether interpersonal relationship orientation, which is an independent variable, has a significant effect on SNS addiction tendency, which is a dependent variable. It is revealed that interpersonal relation orientation has a significant effect on SNS addiction tendency (β=.401, t=6.242, p<.001). At third
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step, a multiple regression analysis is conducted while interpersonal relationship orientation and FoMO have become independent variables and SNS addiction tendency has become an independent variable in order to figure out whether interpersonal relationship orientation, which is an independent variable, and FoMO, which is a mediating factor, have a significant effect on SNS addiction tendency, which is a dependent variable. As a result, interpersonal relationship orientation has a significant effect on SNS addiction tendency ($\beta=.319$, $t=4.913$, $p<.001$). And FoMO has a significant effect on SNS addiction tendency ($\beta=270$, $t=4.164$, $p<.001$). However, at step 3, while FoMO (a mediating variable) has a significant effect on SNS addiction tendency (a dependent variable), the effect of interpersonal relationship orientation has reduced than that of step 2 ($\beta=401 > \beta=.319$). Therefore, FoMO has a partial mediating effect on the relationship between interpersonal relationship orientation and SNS addiction tendency. A Sobel test is carried out in order to verify the significance of a mediating effect of FoMO on the relationship between interpersonal relationship orientation and SNS addiction tendency, proving its significance statistically ($Z=3.545$, $p<.001$). Under these circumstances, it can be assumed that FoMO has a partial mediating effect on the relationship between interpersonal relationship orientation and SNS addiction tendency.

4. Conclusion

For the purpose of identifying whether interpersonal relationship orientation and FoMO affect SNS addiction tendency, this study is conducted centered on college students, the age group who frequently use an SNS. The result and summary of this study is as follows:

Firstly, with regard to the correlation between interpersonal relationship orientation, FoMO and SNS addiction tendency, interpersonal relationship orientation and FoMO show a static correlation with SNS addiction tendency. This result corresponds to previous studies: interpersonal relationship orientation shows a static correlation with immersion in SNS[12] and middle schoolers high in interpersonal relationship orientation show high addiction tendency in SNS[20]. It also corresponds to the research which suggests that FoMO triggers the frequent use of SNS and then more use of SNS leads to FoMO[19]. The research which shows that FoMO and similar loneliness have a significant static relation on SNS addiction tendency[27-29] also corresponds to the study result.

Secondly, a multiple regression analysis and a Sobel test are carried out in order to figure out whether interpersonal relationship orientation affects SNS addiction tendency while FoMO mediated. And the result shows that interpersonal relationship orientation has a significant
effect on SNS addiction tendency with FoMO partially mediated. The result corresponds to previous studies; interpersonal relationship orientation has a significant effect on SNS addiction tendency[30], SNS usage is deeply related to interpersonal relationship[31], people with interpersonal relationship issues are more likely to use smartphone devices for social compensation, indulging in the use of SNS[9]. The result is also in line with the existing study: college students frequently contact SNS and search for popular information in order to reduce the feeling of isolation and try to participate in the relationship among friends, leading to SNS addiction tendency[14][20]. In a collective culture like Korea, individuals tend to reduce the feeling of isolation by relying on homogeneity and, if being alienated, people could experience extreme fear [14]. And this study firstly shows the research result that interpersonal relationship orientation affects FoMO. Meaningfully, the structural relation which suggests that interpersonal relationship orientation affects SNS addiction tendency while FoMO partially mediated has been revealed.

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