THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO) AND SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT AMONG STUDENTS AT SEMARANG STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract
Rapid technological advances coupled with high mobile connectivity have driven an increase in social media usage, particularly among students. This is because students are in the emerging adulthood phase, a transitional phase from late adolescence to early adulthood, during which social media is often used to support developmental tasks. However, intensive social media use also poses risks to mental health, one of which is the emergence of the phenomenon known as fear of missing out (FoMO). FoMO drives the urge to stay constantly connected to social media, potentially leading to excessive digital consumption patterns. This study aims to analyze the relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and social media engagement among students at Semarang State University as a basis for formulating strategies to optimize social media use and prevent its negative impacts. This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational research design, and the data analysis technique used was simple linear regression. The population in this study consisted of 375 students selected using proportional stratified random sampling. The instruments used included the Fear of Missing Out Scale: FoMOs and the Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents (SMES-A). Data analysis revealed a positive correlation between fear of missing out and social media engagement, with values of R = 0.952, R² = 0.907, and B = 0.721. These results indicate that an increase in fear of missing out influences students' social media engagement. This finding underscores the importance of interventions that promote healthy and proportional use of social media.
Keywords: Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Social Media Engagement, Students, Social Media

Abstrak
Kemajuan teknologi yang pesat disertai tingginya konektivitas seluler mendorong intensitas penggunaan media sosial semakin tinggi, khususnya di kalangan mahasiswa. Hal ini terjadi karena mahasiswa berada pada fase perkembangan emerging adulthood, yakni fase transisi dari masa remaja akhir menuju dewasa awal, di mana media sosial 1aszsering dimanfaatkan untuk mendukung tugas-tugas perkembangan yang ada di dalamnya. Meskipun demikian, penggunaan media soisal yang intens juga membahwa resiko terhadap kesehatan mental, salah satunya adalah munculnya fenomena fear of missing out (FoMO). FoMO memicu dorongan untuk terus terhubung dengan media sosial, sehingga berpotensi menciptakaan pola konsumsi digital yang berlebihan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara fear of missing out (FoMO) dan social media engagement pada mahasiswa Universitas Negeri Semarang sebagai

dasar perumusan strategi optimasilasi penggunaan media sosial dan pencegahan dampak negatifnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain penelitian korelasional, dan teknik analisis data yang digunakan adalah regresi linier sederhana Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah 375 mahasiswa yang dipilih menggunakan teknik proposionate stratified random sampling. Intrusmen yang digunakan meliputi Fear of Missing Out Scale: FoMOs dan Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents (SMES-A). Analisis data menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif antara fear of missing out dengan social media engagement, dengan nilai R = 0,952, R^2 = 0,907, dan B = 0,721. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa semakin meningkatnya fear of missing out, akan mempengaruhi social media engagement mahasiswa. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya intervensi yang mendorong penggunaan media sosial secara sehat dan proposional.
Kata kunci*: Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Social Media Engagement, Mahasiswa, Media Sosial*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology in Indonesia shows significant acceleration, marked by the number of active mobile connections exceeding the total population and an internet penetration rate of 74.6%. This condition has resulted in high intensity of social media use, which in January 2025 was recorded at 143 million active users with an average usage duration of 3 hours and 11 minutes per day. A survey revealed that the main reason people access the internet is to open social media, and the highest internet penetration rate was found among students, reaching 98.88%. Social media serves as the main means of communication and information exchange among students. This platform is widely used to share academic materials, including lecture notes, homework, project papers, and even educational videos.

Social media is a computer-based communication platform that allows users to interact socially with their audience, either directly (real-time) or indirectly (asynchronous). Engagement on social media, which is manifested through interactive activities such as commenting, sharing content, and participating in online conversations, has been proven to encourage increased intensity of social media use. This occurs because engagement fosters emotional attachment while strengthening the individual's urge to stay connected to their social network. *Social Media Engagement* is understood as the quality of a person's experience when using web-based technology that facilitates interaction, creation, and sharing of content with people and organizations in their social network. Furthermore, COBRA (Consumer Online Brand Related Activities) divides social media engagement into three mechanisms, namely consumption (the activity of viewing or accessing content), contribution (when they like, share, or comment), and creation (creating new content related to a brand).

Students who are in the transition stage from late adolescence to early adulthood utilize social media as a means of fulfilling their developmental needs at this stage, including autonomy, intimacy, and identity formation. It is not surprising that students are the group with the highest intensity of social media use, because social media use provides a space

to support their developmental process during emerging adulthood. Individuals in the emerging adulthood stage are prone to experiencing the phenomenon of fear of missing out (FoMO), because this period of development is synonymous with the search for identity and major changes in various aspects of life.

The FoMO phenomenon can be defined as a person's strong urge to always follow the lives of other individuals who are considered interesting and successful through online media, accompanied by anxiety in these activities. FoMO reflects the subjective perception of individuals who feel that others are enjoying pleasant moments, while they are left behind and are not part of those pleasant things. FoMO is closely related to the use of social media, where anxiety about being left behind in terms of information updates or someone's status is overcome by excessive use of online applications, which are increasingly developed to enable people to share and follow each other.

The use of social media has a strong connection with the phenomenon of *fear of missing out* (FoMO). Students with high levels of FoMO tend to be more intensely involved in activities on these platforms. This involvement reflects a psychological urge to continuously follow the information and social activities of their peers, which ultimately has the potential to lead to excessive digital consumption patterns. It is further explained that the relationship between fear of missing out and social media addiction is mediated by social media engagement. From this explanation, we can conclude that social media use among students can be influenced by FoMo, where individuals with high levels of FoMO tend to be more active in social media activities mediated by social media engagement.

In a study conducted by , it was identified that fear of missing out (FoMO) acts as a significant predictor of social media engagement. In line with this, research conducted on children aged 9-11 years by reported that there is a significant positive correlation between fear of missing out and social media engagement. Then, research by Marcela and Suryadi (2023) found a significant and strong positive relationship (r=0.745) between FoMo and social media engagement in Generation X, showing that the higher the FoMo, the higher the social media engagement. Furthermore, the results of a study of individuals aged 18-25 years in Surabaya showed that social media engagement can indeed strengthen social relationships. However, on the other hand, intense involvement can also trigger feelings of fear of missing out (FoMO). An intensive 2-week study with university students found that fear of missing out (FoMO) is a mechanism that mediates loneliness and social media use. Seeing the rapid development of social media and various accompanying phenomena, researchers were interested in exploring the relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and social media engagement. Findings from previous studies were used as a conceptual basis for formulating the hypothesis that there is a relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and social media engagement among students at Semarang State University. Students were chosen because they are in a transitional phase from late adolescence to early adulthood (*emerging adulthood*), a phase characterized by intense psychological and emotional needs and development,

making them more vulnerable to the influence of social media. This study is expected to provide an empirical description as a contribution to formulating strategies to maximize the positive use of social media, while minimizing the potential negative impacts it may have on students.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational research design, which is a study that aims to determine the relationship between two variables. In this case, variable X (independent) is *fear of missing out* (FoMO) and variable Y (dependent) is *social media engagement*. The data analysis technique used is simple linear regression, because this study only involves two variables with one direction of influence. The population of this study was students at Semarang State University. Sampling was conducted using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique, with a sample size of 375. The measuring instrument used in this study was a five-point Likert scale model for psychological assessment. The first scale, namely the *Fear of Missing Out Scale: FoMOs*, was developed from theory with a total of 10 items, validity of 0.382 – 0.944, and reliability of $\alpha = 0.920$. The second scale, namely the Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents (SMES-A), was developed with a total of 11 items, validity of 0.477 – 0.871, and reliability of $\alpha = 0.899$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The variables studied were *fear of missing out* (FoMO) and *social media engagement* among students at Semarang State University. The relationship between the variables was analyzed using simple linear regression analysis with SPSS version 26. The results of the simple linear regression test are shown in the following table:

Table 1. Simple Linear Regression Test Results

VARIABLE	R	R^2	B	T	SIG.
FEAR OF MISSING OUT	0,952	0,907	0,721	57,805	0,000

Based on the results of the simple linear regression test listed in Table 1, the R value is 0.952; R^2 is 0.907; B is 0.721; t is 57.805; and Sig. is 0.000. The R value indicates the correlation level between the variables of fear of missing out and social media engagement of 0.952, which indicates a relationship between the two variables. Furthermore, the R^2 value of 0.907 shows that fear of missing out contributes 90.7% to social media engagement. The regression coefficient (B) has a positive value of 0.721, indicating that an increase in fear of missing out will be followed by an increase in social media engagement among students.

Thus, the hypothesis in this study can be accepted, namely that there is a relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and social media engagement among students at Semarang State University. The results of this study are in line with the results of a study by Elsayed (2025), which explains that social media use is positively and significantly related to the phenomenon of fear of missing out (FoMO). This means that the higher the

level of FoMO experienced by individuals, the greater their tendency to be intensively involved in social media activities (social media engagement). Individuals with high levels of fear of missing out (FoMO) tend to maintain the habit of monitoring the activities of their peers through social media in an effort to avoid feeling left out of experiences that are considered enjoyable or beneficial. The FoMO phenomenon not only shows a positive and significant relationship with the intensity of social media engagement, but also plays a role as one of the main driving factors of digital engagement among students.

To overcome the negative impact of FoMO on social media use, a framework has been introduced, namely "Social Media FoMO (fear of missing out) to JOMO (joy of missing out). This framework uses Social Media Mindfulness Practice (SMMP) to reduce FoMO and shift it towards JOMO, which is the direction of more empowered social media interaction (or refraining from it) to bring about well-being in individuals. SMMP has three stages, namely awareness, insight, and action. In the awareness stage, individuals must become aware of their social media usage habits by observing their social media usage patterns, such as when they use it, how often, and how they feel afterwards. The second stage is insight, where individuals must understand the patterns of social media usage that are harmful to themselves and what they need when using social media, in order to then determine their needs and intentions in using social media. The final stage is action, where individuals try to change their social media usage from automatic (unconscious) to intentional (conscious) by making conscious decisions to use or avoid social media when the urge to access social media arises.

The above explanation can be a relevant and applicable solution to the findings of the research conducted by the researcher, where the strategy in the "Social Media FoMO to JOMO" framework offers a preventive approach to managing high social media engagement caused by FoMO. Through this approach, students can reduce the impact of the FoMO phenomenon so that it does not lead to an increase in social media engagement, which has the potential to cause negative effects on students, such as psychological well-being disorders and unhealthy social media usage behavior. There are several limitations to this study. First, the quantitative design makes it difficult to explore the interactions between variables in greater depth. Second, the method of data collection through questionnaires has the potential to cause respondent subjectivity bias, such as the tendency to give answers that are considered most socially acceptable. Third, the research sample only came from students at Semarang State University, so the results may not apply to students at other universities with different social, cultural, or technological access characteristics. Finally, this study only focused on two main variables, namely *fear of missing out* (FoMO) and *social media engagement*, without discussing other factors that may also influence student involvement in social media use.

DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and social media engagement among students at Semarang State University. Based on the results of a simple linear regression analysis conducted using SPSS version 26, it was found that

the fear of missing out variable has a very strong and significant relationship with social media engagement. This is indicated by a correlation coefficient (R) value of 0.952, which indicates a very high level of relationship between the two variables. This value indicates that students who have a high level of FoMO tend to have greater involvement in the use of social media. These findings show that FoMO is one of the psychological factors that plays an important role in shaping individual engagement behavior in digital activities, particularly in the context of social media use among students. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.907 shows that fear of missing out contributes 90.7% to social media engagement. This figure shows that most of the variation in the level of student engagement in social media use can be explained by their level of FoMO. In other words, the higher an individual's level of concern about the possibility of missing out on social experiences experienced by others, the higher the individual's tendency to actively engage in social media activities. The positive regression coefficient (B) of 0.721 also reinforces this finding, as it shows that every increase in the level of FoMO will be followed by an increase in the level of student social media engagement.

This finding is in line with various previous studies that highlight the relationship between FoMO and social media usage behavior. Elsayed (2025) explains that the phenomenon of fear of missing out has a positive and significant relationship with the intensity of social media usage. Individuals who experience FoMO tend to have a strong need to continuously monitor the social activities of others through digital platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, or WhatsApp. This need arises from the desire to stay connected to the social environment and avoid feeling left out of experiences that are considered important or enjoyable. Therefore, individuals with high levels of FoMO often exhibit behavioral patterns characterized by higher frequency of social media use, longer usage time, and more intense involvement in various digital activities.

In the context of college students, the FoMO phenomenon can be understood as part of the dynamics of social life in early adulthood. College students are in a phase of development characterized by a high need for social acceptance, identity formation, and involvement in various social activities. Social media then becomes a means of facilitating these needs by providing a broad and fast space for interaction. Through social media, students can follow the activities of their peers, share experiences, and obtain the latest information about various social activities. However, the ease of access to information can also trigger feelings of anxiety when individuals feel left out of the social experiences of others. Fear of missing out is basically a form of social anxiety that arises when individuals feel that others are enjoying more interesting or meaningful experiences without them. This feeling drives individuals to constantly monitor social activities on digital media in an effort to reduce this anxiety. In the long term, this behavior can form a pattern of intense involvement with social media, so that individuals tend to open social media applications more often, check notifications, or update information about other people's activities. This explains why individuals with high levels of FoMO tend to show higher levels of social media engagement than individuals with low levels of FoMO.

The results of this study can also be explained through Bandura's social learning theory. According to Bandura, individual behavior is influenced by the process of observing the behavior of others in their social environment. In the context of social media, students can easily observe various activities carried out by their peers, such as academic activities, recreation, or personal achievements shared through digital posts. This observation process can then give rise to the feeling that individuals must always be involved in various social activities so as not to fall behind their group. Therefore, social media not only functions as a means of communication, but also as a social space that influences the formation of individuals' behavior and perceptions of themselves.

High involvement in social media use does not always have a negative impact. In some cases, social media can provide benefits such as expanding social networks, facilitating access to information, and supporting the learning process. However, excessive involvement can have various unfavorable psychological consequences. Previous studies have shown that high levels of FoMO are often associated with various psychological problems, such as stress, anxiety, decreased psychological well-being, and disturbances in time management. Individuals who experience FoMO tend to feel pressured to keep up with social activities on digital media, making it difficult to break away from social media use even though it interferes with other more important activities. In the context of student academic life, excessive involvement in social media use can also affect learning productivity. Students who check social media too often may experience concentration problems, decreased focus in learning, and difficulties in managing time effectively. This shows that the FoMO phenomenon is not only related to social media usage behavior, but also has broader implications for students' psychological well-being and academic success.

To overcome the negative impacts of the FoMO phenomenon, Chan et al. (2022) introduced a framework known as the "Social Media FoMO to JOMO" concept. This concept offers an approach that aims to change individuals' patterns of engagement with social media from reactive to more conscious and controlled. In this framework, individuals are encouraged to develop awareness of their social media usage patterns, thereby reducing the tendency to use social media excessively. The framework uses the Social Media Mindfulness Practice (SMMP) approach, which consists of three main stages: awareness, insight, and action. The first stage is awareness, where individuals begin to recognize their social media usage habits. At this stage, individuals are encouraged to observe how, when, and how often they use social media in their daily lives. This awareness is important because many individuals use social media automatically without truly realizing the reasons or purposes behind their usage.

The second stage is insight, which is the stage where individuals begin to understand patterns of social media use that may have a negative impact on them. At this stage, individuals are expected to evaluate their experiences after using social media, such as feelings of satisfaction, anxiety, or even mental fatigue. Through this process of reflection, individuals can understand the real needs they want to fulfill through social

media use, so they can determine healthier limits for its use. The third stage is action, which is the stage where individuals begin to make changes in their social media usage patterns. At this stage, individuals are encouraged to make conscious decisions about when they will use social media and when they need to avoid it. Thus, social media usage is no longer driven by impulsive urges related to FoMO, but is based on more rational and controlled considerations. The approach offered through the FoMO to JOMO concept can be a relevant strategy in helping students manage their engagement with social media in a healthier way. The concept of joy of missing out (JOMO) emphasizes that individuals do not always have to be involved in every social activity that takes place on digital media. Instead, individuals can feel satisfaction and peace of mind by choosing activities that truly suit their personal needs and priorities. Thus, individuals can continue to use social media positively without experiencing psychological pressure due to feelings of being left behind by others.

The findings of this study have important implications for various parties, especially educational institutions and educational psychology practitioners. Universities can play a role in providing education on healthy social media use through various digital literacy programs or student counseling services. In addition, students also need to be given an understanding of the importance of time management and balance between digital activities and academic and social activities in the real world. Although this study provides significant findings regarding the relationship between fear of missing out and social media engagement, there are several limitations that need to be considered. First, this study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method, so it cannot explore in depth the subjective experiences of students in dealing with the FoMO phenomenon. A qualitative approach can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how students interpret these experiences in their daily lives. Second, data collection in this study was conducted using a self-report questionnaire, so there is a possibility of respondent subjectivity bias. Some respondents may have given answers that are considered more socially acceptable than their actual experiences. Therefore, future research may consider using more diverse data collection methods, such as in-depth interviews or observation of social media usage behavior.

Third, the research sample only came from Semarang State University students, so the results cannot necessarily be generalized to student populations at other universities with different social, cultural, or technological access characteristics. Future research should involve respondents from various educational institutions to obtain a broader picture of the FoMO phenomenon among students. In addition, this study only focused on two main variables, namely fear of missing out and social media engagement. In fact, there are various other factors that can also influence an individual's involvement in social media use, such as personality, level of loneliness, social support, and motivation for using social media. Future research can develop a more complex research model by considering these additional variables. Overall, the results of this study indicate that fear of missing out is a factor that has a very strong influence on social media engagement among students at

Semarang State University. This finding confirms that the FoMO phenomenon is not only related to individual psychological aspects, but also has broad implications for the digital behavior patterns of the younger generation. Therefore, more comprehensive efforts are needed to help students manage their social media use in a healthier and more balanced way, so that social media can be used as a means of supporting personal and academic development without causing negative impacts on their psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted using simple linear regression analysis, it can be concluded that the variable *fear of missing out* (FoMO) has a significant effect on *social media engagement* among students at Semarang State University. The analysis results show that the correlation coefficient (R) value is 0.952, indicating a very strong relationship between the FoMO variable and *social media engagement*. This high correlation value shows that the two variables are closely related, so that changes in the level of FoMO tend to be followed by changes in the level of student engagement in social media use. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R²) value of 0.907 shows that the *fear of missing out* variable contributes 90.7% to students' *social media engagement*. This means that most of the variation in the level of student engagement in social media activities can be explained by their level of FoMO. Meanwhile, the remaining 9.3% is influenced by other factors outside the variables studied in this research. These findings confirm that FoMO is one of the psychological factors that plays a dominant role in influencing social media usage behavior among students. Furthermore, the regression coefficient (B) value of 0.721 indicates a positive relationship between the two variables.

This positive value indicates that every increase in the level of fear of missing out will be followed by an increase in the level of social media engagement among students. In other words, the higher the level of anxiety students have about the possibility of missing out on information, experiences, or social activities experienced by others, the higher their tendency to be actively involved in social media use. Thus, the hypothesis in this study can be accepted, namely that there is a positive influence between fear of missing out and social media engagement among students at Semarang State University. These findings show that the FoMO phenomenon is one of the important factors that encourage students to continue to monitor and participate in various activities on social media in an effort to stay connected with their social environment and avoid feeling left out of the experiences of others.

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