

Description of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in Students and Implications for Guidance and Counseling

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Abstract

The phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has become increasingly relevant among adolescents due to the increased use of social media. FoMO refers to a psychological condition characterized by anxiety and fear of missing out on information or experiences that others may have, especially online. This study aims to explore the level of FoMO in high school students and its implications for guidance and counseling services. The approach used was a quantitative method with descriptive analysis. The study sample was obtained through stratified random sampling, with 262 students at SMA Negeri 3 Padang as respondents. Data analysis was conducted descriptively using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. The results revealed that 46.18% of students experienced moderate levels of FoMO. This study contributes novelty by examining FoMO in high school students, an age group vulnerable to the influence of social media. These findings suggest the need for significant guidance and counseling interventions to help reduce FoMO among students. Future research is encouraged to expand this study by examining FoMO in relation to other variables.

Keywords: Fear of Missing Out, Students, Guidance and Counseling



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Introduction

The emergence of digital technology has brought major changes in the way of communicating and storing information because technology is developing rapidly (Aulia et al., 2023). The presence of the internet in the world has had a tremendous influence on human life (Darmawan et al., 2019). The ever-growing sophistication and offer of attractive features has led to an increase in internet use in society, especially among teenagers (Astuti & Kusumiati, 2021). The majority of teenagers who own smartphones are also social media users, social media allows users to communicate anytime and anywhere (Fronika, 2019). The increasing use of smartphones among teenagers shows their high engagement with cyberspace, especially social media. This attachment encourages individuals to continue monitoring online activities, this condition is known as Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) (Abdulloh, 2021).

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) according to Przybylski is a feeling of fear of missing opportunities or social momentum, which makes individuals continue to monitor or look at social media to always be up to date with the latest news from their friends and their environment (Przybylski et al., 2013). FoMO can also be understood as a syndrome that creates fear in individuals, thereby encouraging them to continue following or monitoring other people's activities (Kalisna & Wahyumiani, 2021). FoMO emerged as an impact of modern life which is supported by technological advances. Before social media developed, feelings of anxiety due to fear of being left behind could still be experienced in everyday life. However, the development of social media, ease of internet access through digital devices, and the influence of online marketing have strengthened and expanded the emergence of FoMO among society (McGinnis, 2020). FoMO often occurs in the context of social media, where individuals are constantly exposed to posts by friends, family, or influencers about the activities they engage in (Nasution et al., 2023).

FoMO has a detrimental impact on teenagers' lives, for example a lack of social interaction with peers or the surrounding community (Nadzirah et al., 2022). FoMO makes individuals have difficulty sleeping (Abel et al., 2016). In fact, FoMO is closely related to a person's lack of motivation to learn (Alt, 2015). Several studies show that the level of FoMO among students varies greatly. Siregar (2022) shows that 62.2% of teenagers in Makassar City experience FoMO in the moderate category. Pratiwi et al (2020) also found that the level of FoMO among students was in the medium category, while Jauhariyah (2022), showed that the level of FoMO among students was in the low category at 46%. Hasanah et al (2024) found that students' FoMO level was quite high with a percentage of 32.88%. According to Przybylski et al (2013) there are three factors that cause someone to experience FoMO, namely the unfulfilled needs for autonomy, competence and connectedness.

This research was conducted on students because based on research findings conducted by Przybylski et al (2013), teenagers aged 12-18 years have a very high tendency to experience FoMO. This makes them unable to stop monitoring other people's activities on social media. Apart from that, it is hoped that this research can detect Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in students early so that it does not interfere with student focus and learning productivity. Despite the very rapid development of the internet, research discussing Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is still limited. So researchers hope that this research on FoMO can help to explore FoMO among students, especially high school students.

Based on the research discussed above, it can be concluded that FoMO can occur in students and can cause negative impacts such as lack of focus and concentration when studying. Apart from that, FoMO also has an effect on reducing motivation to learn, because individuals find it difficult to focus due to frequently checking notifications. This condition triggers stress, a sense of loss, and discomfort when you don't keep up with other people's developments.

This research aims to describe the fear of missing out (FoMO) in students and see the implications for guidance and counseling services. By using a descriptive quantitative approach, this research is expected to provide an empirical picture of FoMO among high school students. Considering that students are the generation most exposed to digital technology which is easily indicated by FoMO, guidance and counseling services are needed to minimize this.

Method

The approach used in this research is quantitative with a descriptive type (Mukhyi, 2023) which aims to describe the level of FoMO in students and its implications in guidance and counseling services. Data was collected using instruments that have been tested for validity and reliability in order to obtain systematic results that can be measured objectively (Abdullah et al., 2022). The population in this study were students of SMA Negeri 3 Padang in classes X and XI for the 2024/2025 academic year. Sampling was carried out online via Google form, using stratified random sampling techniques with a total sample consisting of 262 students. The instrument used in this research was based on the fear of missing out scale (FoMOS) compiled by Przybylski (Przybylski et al., 2013). The instrument has been tested for validity with 27 valid items with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.937. The assessment was carried out using a Likert scale and the respondents' total scores were classified into three categories, namely low, medium and high, based on score intervals according to Azwar (2012).

The analysis used is descriptive analysis which aims to describe phenomena based on data collected factually, systematically and objectively (Mustafa et al., 2022). The analysis process includes calculating measures of centering (mean, median, and mode) and dispersion (standard deviation, and range) (Amruddin et al., 2022). In data processing using the help of Microsoft Excel and SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) applications 25.

Results and Discussion

Based on the results of research that has been conducted, there are students' Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) results in the medium category. Overall, the highest score was 135 and the lowest score was 34. Complete data regarding the results of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among students and its implications for guidance and counseling services as a whole can be seen in the following graph (Figure 1).

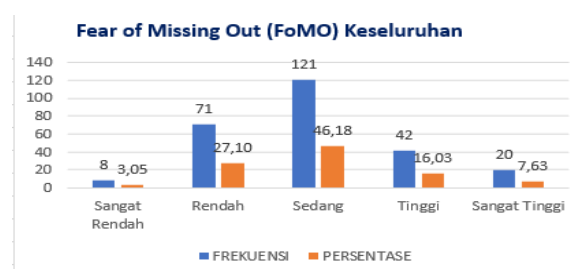


Figure 1. Overall Frequency Distribution of FoMO (n = 262)

From the research results (Figure 1), it can be concluded that students' Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) level is in the medium category, meaning that students sometimes feel afraid or worried if they do not know about other people's activities via social media, but not to an excessive level. In line with Siregar (2022) research, this means that teenagers can still control themselves in using social media. This happens because someone wants to stay connected with other people, try to be better, and have the freedom to choose what they want to do (Przybylski et al., 2013).

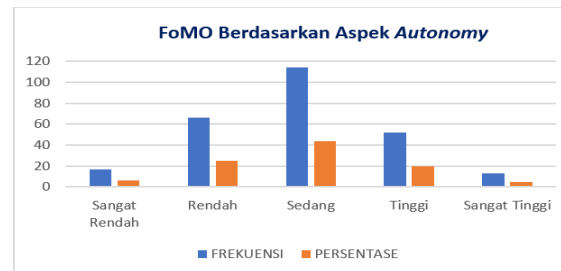


Figure 2. Distribution of FoMO based on Autonomy aspects (n=262)

Based on Figure 2, it can be seen that students' Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) based on the Autonomy aspect is in the medium category. This means that students are not yet fully able to control the decision whether to participate in activities on social media or not, but they also do not completely lose control. This finding is in line with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012), which states that low fulfillment of the need for autonomy makes it difficult for individuals to control decisions independently. In the context of FoMO, this is reflected in the compulsive urge to stay connected to social media. This is because individuals with low autonomy will be more easily distracted when looking at a smartphone, because what they think about are interesting or extraordinary things done by other people (Dossey, 2014).

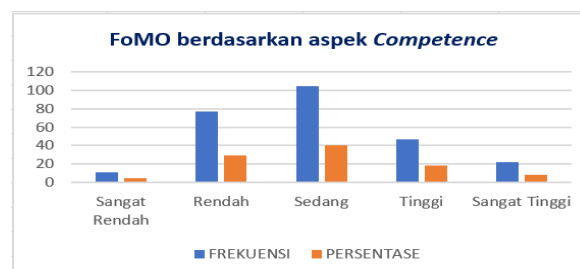


Figure 3. Distribution of FoMO based on Competence aspects (n=262)

Based on Figure 3, it can be seen that students' Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) based on the Competence aspect is in the medium category. This means that most students have sufficient self-confidence in their abilities, but there is still a tendency to compare themselves with others, especially when they see the achievements of their friends on social media. This happens because individuals will feel discouraged if other people's posts are more popular than theirs (Fuster et al., 2017). This finding is in line with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012), which states that low fulfillment of competence needs can trigger self-dissatisfaction and the urge to seek validation through social media, as a form of FoMO symptom.

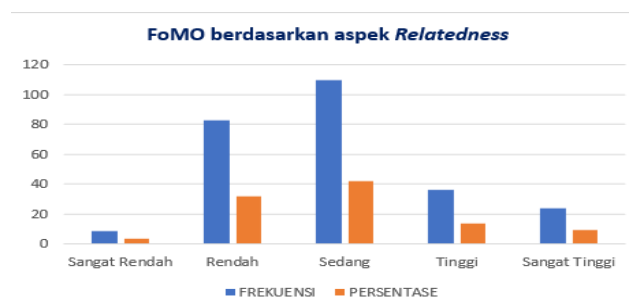


Figure 4. Distribution of FoMO based on the Relatedness aspect (n=262)

Based on Figure 4, it can be seen that students' Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) based on the Relatedness aspect is in the medium category. This means that, in general, students have a fairly large need to stay connected via social media, but are still able to regulate this urge within reasonable limits. John Grohol states that some teenagers and adults tend to prioritize connection via social media, even in risky situations such as when driving or in direct social interactions. This behavior is not considered a nuisance, but rather a form of social connection (Dossey, 2014). In line with Deci & Ryan (2012) states that the need for relatedness, namely the need for social connection and achieving good quality relationships, is the center of psychological needs and well-being.

Table 1. FoMO by gender (n=262)

FoMO	Jenis Kelamin	Group Statistics			
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Laki-laki	104	70.4135	15.97669	1.56664
	Perempuan	158	72.1899	16.98675	1.35139

In the table above, it can be seen that there are differences in Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) between male and female students. Mean FoMO for male students is 70.41 with a standard deviation of 15.9. Meanwhile for female students the mean is 72.18 with a standard deviation of 16.9. Although there are differences, these differences are not very significant. The table of tests on Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) can be seen in the following graph:

Table 2. Independent sample test

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
FoMO	Equal variances assumed	.070	.792	-.848	260	.397	-1.77641	2.09535	-5.90242	2.34960
	Equal variances not assumed			-.859	229.828	.391	-1.77641	2.06897	-5.85298	2.30016

The results of the difference test obtained a t value of -848 with a magnitude (df) of 260 and a significance value (2-tailed sig.) of 0.397. The SPSS results show that the significance difference (sig. 2-tailed) of 0.397 is greater than 0.05. This means that there is no statistically significant difference between the level of FoMO in male and female students at SMAN N 3 Padang. The mean difference value is -1.776 with a 95% confidence interval between 2.34 or 2.30.

Based on the table, the mean difference value is -1.7764, which shows that the average FoMO score for male students is slightly lower than female students. However, because the differences are not significant, it can be concluded that gender is not a factor that differentiates the level of FoMO in students. In line with Kuss & Griffiths (2017) who stated that teenagers from various backgrounds,

both men and women, use social media as the main means to establish social connections, share information, and maintain their own existence. Therefore, both men and women are equally susceptible to experiencing FoMO when they feel left behind by information or social activities that occur online.

The research results depict FoMO in students based on the aspects of autonomy, competence and relatedness, which are generally in the medium category. However, this does not mean that there are no students who experience FoMO in the high and very high categories. Guidance and Counseling teachers at schools certainly need to pay attention to this. The types of services that can be provided by Guidance and Counseling teachers to minimize the occurrence of FoMO are:

Information Services, According to Prayitno (2012), information services are efforts aimed at addressing individuals' lack of necessary information—information that is considered important to be known and understood. Information services can serve a preventive function provided by school counselors to students, particularly regarding the issue of *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO) in the context of social media use. These services play a role in educating and raising students' awareness to use social media wisely and proportionally, as well as in fostering healthy social connections both online and offline.

Individual Counseling Services, According to Tohirin (2007), individual counseling services are provided by counselors to assist clients in understanding themselves, including their strengths and weaknesses, their environment, and the problems they are facing, along with strategies for resolving those problems. Individuals experiencing *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO) can express their difficulties to the counselor as part of the problem-solving function. For instance, a student may report feeling distressed when seeing social media posts of friends engaging in activities without them.

Group Guidance Services, Group guidance is one of the services in Guidance and Counseling that utilizes group dynamics to deliver personal, career, and social information, aiming to help participants plan appropriate actions or address specific needs based on the information provided by the group leader, namely the counselor (Prayitno, 2012). One relevant topic for group guidance is *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO), where group members can share their perspectives and experiences related to FoMO symptoms arising from the unwise use of digital technology.

Group Counseling Services, Group counseling is a service conducted within a group setting that utilizes group dynamics with the aim of resolving clients' personal and confidential problems, as well as developing their communication and social interaction skills (Prayitno, 2012). School counselors can implement group counseling sessions with individuals who are experiencing issues related to *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO). Through group counseling, these individuals may gradually reduce or even eliminate their FoMO tendencies.

Conclusion

The level of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among SMA Negeri 3 Padang students is generally in the medium category. In the autonomy aspect, students are not completely forced to do something, although they are still influenced by the social environment. In the competence aspect, students sometimes feel inferior when they see other people's success on social media, but are still able to

recognize and demonstrate their own abilities. Meanwhile, in the relatedness aspect, students feel it is important to stay connected online, but not to the point of showing excessive dependence. In addition, there is no significant difference in the level of FoMO between male and female students, so gender is not a differentiating factor in the level of FoMO of students at this school. For this reason, the role of guidance and counseling teachers is very important in providing information services regarding healthy use of social media, individual counseling services for students with high symptoms of FoMO, group guidance to develop independence and self-confidence, as well as group counseling to reduce social anxiety due to FoMO. This approach is expected to help students manage FoMO adaptively and support their psychological well-being. Future research is recommended to use a mixed approach or consider other factors such as social support.

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