



Tired But Can't Stop: Exploring the Association of Fear of Missing Out (FoMo) and Social Media Fatigue among Emerging Adults

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Indonesia ranks third as the country with the most social media users, with emerging adults making up the largest group. On average, Indonesians spend almost 6 hours a day playing social media. This condition can cause both physical and psychological problems. One of the impacts of excessive social media use is Social Media Fatigue (SMF). The level of SMF is influenced by several factors, one of which is Fear of Missing Out (FoMo), which is a fear of missing out on experiences that others are enjoying. SMF and FoMo can significantly impact an individual's mental health. The link between the two conditions is clear, but there is little in-depth research linking the two. This study aimed to explore the association of Fear of Missing out (FoMo) with Social Media Fatigue (SMF) among emerging adults. **Method:** A cross-sectional study design was conducted among 157 men and women emerging adults. Participants completed a self-administered questionnaire that consisted of demographic characteristics, Fear of Missing Out scale, and Social Media Fatigue scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive analysis and Pearson Correlation statistic technique. **Results:** Descriptive analysis results showed that men showed a higher tendency of both fear of missing out and social media fatigue compared to women. Further, a significant yet moderate correlation was found between FoMo and SMF among emerging adults. **Novelty:** This study contributed to explore further on the relationship between fear of missing out (FoMo) and social media fatigue specifically among emerging adults.

INTRODUCTION

The significant increase in the use of social media in recent decades has given humans the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently. With social media, individuals can more easily build and establish their interpersonal relationships with those closest to them (Khan et al., 2022). Undeniably, social media has become an integral part that cannot be separated from the routine of daily life. Various types of social media platforms are offered today with various unique features, which can be broadly divided into two types, namely image-based social media and text-based social media. Image-based social media focuses on the main features that involve uploading images, such as Instagram and Snapchat. Meanwhile, text-based social media emphasizes text features in its uploads, such as social media X (formerly called Twitter) and Tumblr. However, almost all social media platforms try to have both types to be able to further increase user numbers.

Currently, Indonesia ranks 3rd as the country with the most active social media users. People in Indonesia spend an average of about 5 hours 54 minutes accessing social media per month (We Are Social, 2023). More specifically, emerging adults or young individuals are the dominant group in using social media (Howe, 2023). Emerging adults are individuals who are in the age stage of 18 to 29 years. This stage of development is an exploration phase where individuals can look for interests and desires in their lives. This exploration cannot be separated from the active use of social media, where emerging

adults are the group that uses the internet the most, owns smart devices, and uses social media (Ardelia & Jaro'ah, 2023). Furthermore, the majority of young individuals at this age are students, and this makes social media an important aspect in forming their identity and building social relationships. So, it can be said that social media has a great influence on emerging adults.

In addition to the benefits gained from using social media, of course, various potential negative impacts also arise. One of the most important is the impact on mental health, where a study conducted by Sa'diyah et al. (2022) found that the higher the intensity of a person's social media use, the lower the individual's mental health. When social media use becomes excessive, the risk of mental disorders can increase (Boer et al., 2021; Keles et al., 2020; Marttila et al., 2021; Naslund et al., 2020; Zhong et al., 2021), and the use of social media at a certain level of intensity can produce an abundance of unbalanced information. When this condition occurs, a person has the potential to experience Social Media Fatigue (SMF), which is a condition of social media fatigue due to too much information which then affects cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects (Nurissam & Wulandari, 2023).

Under SMF conditions, individuals tend to experience information overload. Long-term exposure to information overload can place a burden and make individuals feel overwhelmed, resulting in insufficient available processing resources to take in the information (Zhang et al., 2021; Zheng & Ling, 2021). SMF involves two types of fatigue: physical fatigue and psychological fatigue. Physical fatigue can be seen in eye, muscle, and general physical fatigue, while psychological fatigue is characterized by negative feelings such as stress, emotional exhaustion, and the like. There are several factors that affect a person's level of SMF such as privacy concerns, level of self-regulation, and fear of missing out (FoMo) (Sunil et al., 2022).

FoMo refers to the fear or worry of missing out or missing out on experiences that are being enjoyed by others that are unknown to the individual. FoMo is often characterized by a desire to stay connected to what others are doing. Individuals who experience FoMo tend to be constantly active on social media so as not to miss out on other people's information or activities, which can eventually lead to social media fatigue. Some studies have also found that FoMo is associated with SMF (Jabeen et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023).

The concepts of FoMo and SMF are important to examine in order to find out how the fear of being left behind on social media experienced by individuals can lead to the emergence of social media fatigue. The tendency of individuals to always access social media for fear of being left behind is one of the maladaptive uses of social media. This maladaptive use of social media can cause social media fatigue and have a detrimental impact on users such as decreased concentration or experiencing problematic social media use (Świątek et al., 2023). Until now, not many studies have explored in detail the relationship between FoMo and Social Media Fatigue, especially in the context of emerging adults. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between FoMo and Social Media Fatigue among emerging adults. This study seeks to answer the research question "How is the relationship between FoMo and Social Media Fatigue in emerging adults?". By exploring these concepts, this study would provide a more in depth understanding of the dynamics between fear of missing out and tendency to experience social media fatigue among emerging adults.

RESEARCH METHOD

General Background of Research

The current study used a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional survey data collection method. Online data collection was conducted through google forms. Participants were asked to read the description and instructions of the questionnaire, then provided consent to participate in the study before completing the survey. The current study procedure can be seen in Figure 1.

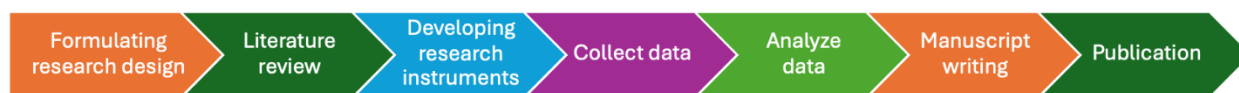


Figure 1. Research procedure.

Participants

The research participants were selected by a purposive sampling method, in which participants who fit the inclusion criteria could voluntarily choose to become participants or not. The inclusion criteria were 1) male and female, 2) aged between 18-29 years old, and 3) owning and using any social media. Prior to data collection, researchers calculated the sample size that was needed in this study using G*Power. Based on the G*Power calculation formula, it is estimated that at least 82 participants are required to obtain a power of 0.8 and a moderate effect size. However, the researcher targeted a minimum of 100 participants due to the generality of the research criteria.

Instrument and Procedures

There are three instruments used in this study, namely the socio-demographic scale, the FoMo scale, and the Social Media Fatigue scale. The socio-demographic scale contains questions about participants' personal data information such as name (initials allowed), age (with options from 18 to 29 years), gender, and type of social media used. The second scale used is the FoMo scale developed by Przybylski et al. (2013). This scale measures a person's tendency to feel fear or anxiety characterized by a desire to stay connected and keep an eye on news developments so as not to be left behind. It is a unidimensional scale consisting of 10 items. This scale uses a Likert rating design with a score range of 1 "Strongly disagree" to a score of 5 "Strongly agree". Participants with high scores on this scale indicate high FoMo tendencies in general. This scale showed a good validity and reliability ($\alpha = 0.76$). The third scale is the Social Media Fatigue scale developed by Zhang et al. (2021). This scale consists of 15 items which are divided into 3 dimensions, namely cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. This scale uses a Likert rating design with a score range of 1 "Strongly disagree" to a score of 5 "Strongly agree". On this scale, individuals who have high scores indicate high fatigue in using social media. On this study, this scale showed a satisfactory validity and reliability ($\alpha = 0.80$).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out with the Jamovi program for macOS version 2.3.21. To answer the research questions, data was analyzed using descriptive statistics analysis and Pearson Correlation technique (Anggarista & Wahyudin, 2022; Jebli et al., 2021; Menebo, 2020; Noviana & Oktaviani, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). These analyses were conducted to explore participants' demographic characteristics and the association between fear of missing out and social media fatigue in the context of emerging adults.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the study participants. All of participants were aged 18-29 ($n = 157$; $M = 20.20$) with most participants were female ($n = 120$; $M = 20.10$) than male ($n = 37$; $M = 20.80$). Most social media preferred by participants were Instagram ($n = 151$), WhatsApp ($n = 150$), and TikTok ($n = 114$).

Table 1. Participants demographic characteristics.

Demographic	n	Percentages	M
Age 18-29 years old	157	100	20.2
Sex			
Male	37	23.57	20.8
Female	120	76.43	20.1
Types of social media used			
Instagram	151	96.18	N/A*
X (Twitter)	97	61.78	
LinkedIn	33	21.02	
WhatsApp	150	95.54	
TikTok	114	72.61	

*N/A = Not available

FOMO and SMF Analysis

Prior to the Pearson correlation analysis, descriptives were conducted to depict a picture of participants score on Fear of Missing Out scale and Social Media Fatigue scale. Table 2 showed the FoMo and SMF descriptives results. Overall, male showed a higher mean score of FoMo ($M = 29.40$), indicating higher tendency of fear of missing out in using social media compared to female ($M = 28.10$). In line with this, male also showed a higher mean score of social media fatigue ($M = 37.20$) compared to female ($M = 33.80$). These results showed a slight tendency of higher fatigue in using social media among male participants.

Table 2. FoMo and SMF descriptives analysis.

Scales	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
FOMO	18.40	28.00	6.90	10.00	50.00
Male	37.00	29.40	29.00	7.26	10
Female	120.00	28.10	27.00	6.79	11
SMF	34.60	35.00	8.45	16.00	60
Male	37.00	37.20	37.00	9.33	19
Female	120.00	33.80	34.00	8.04	16

Table 3 showed a correlation analysis between FoMo and SMF. Findings showed a significant yet medium correlation between fear of missing out and social media fatigue ($r = 0.247$, $p = 0.002$). These findings suggest that a higher fear of missing out could potentially lead to a higher social media fatigue among emerging adults.

Table 3. Correlation between FoMo and SMF.

Variables	r	p
FOMO x SMF	0.24	0.00

Discussion

This study aimed to obtain descriptive analysis in fear of missing out and social media fatigue tendency among emerging adults and explore association between fear of missing out and social media fatigue. Descriptive analysis showed that men showed a higher tendency of both fear of missing out and social media fatigue compared to women (Saphira et al., 2022; Shen et al., 2022; Świątek et al., 2021; Tandon et al., 2021; Tugtekin et al., 2020). There remains an inconsistent gender difference in the level of fear of missing out. The current results support previous findings from Gul et al. (2022) and Qutishat (2020) which revealed that being male is more at risk of experiencing FoMo. However, research from Suhertina et al. (2022) and Rozgonjuk et al. (2021) found no gender differences in FoMo levels. While on the SMF variable, this finding is different from previous findings from Ou et al. (2023) which shows that women are more at risk of experiencing social media fatigue. The inconsistency of gender differences in FoMo and SMF needs to be further explored.

Based on the Pearson test results, a significant yet moderate correlation was found between FoMo and SMF among emerging adults. This suggests that an increase of FoMo may result in an elevated social media fatigue among emerging adults. The results of this study were in line with research conducted by Nurissam and Wulandari (2023) which found that fear of missing out was positively correlated with social media fatigue. This showed that social media users with a tendency of FoMo will spend a lot of time exchanging information and communication on social media which ultimately results in the emergence of social media fatigue. This tendency will be even greater when individuals who experience FoMo make social comparisons (Jabeen et al., 2023).

Furthermore, this study also found that the higher the tendency of fear of missing out in social media use, the higher likelihood that someone will experience social media fatigue. These results are also in line with several prior studies (Ashiru et al., 2023; Bright & Logan, 2018), which showed one of the factors that causes individuals to experience anxiety when they are missing information was because there were psychological aspects that were not fulfilled (Sunil et al., 2022). In the concept of FoMo, aspects of competence, autonomy, and connectedness were considered as important to fulfill psychological needs which were manifested in the form of curiosity about the latest news on social media. The tendency of someone who experienced FoMo could also impact on the amount of information that individuals must process and ultimately result in the emergence of social media fatigue. This relationship gave rise to the FoMo paradox ring which referred to a person's desire to always get the latest information, despite their positive attitude towards the information, but when they get too much information on social media, they will feel overwhelmed.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: A significant yet moderate correlation was found between fear of missing out and social media fatigue among emerging adults. Men participants showed a higher tendency in both fear of missing out and social media fatigue compared to women. **Implication:** This study results implied the increased anxiety and fear of missing

out information in social media could lead to an elevated of social media fatigue among emerging adults. **Limitation:** This study had strengths and limitations. The strength of this study was the fair number of participants and detailed descriptive results of FoMo and SMF based on gender. The weaknesses of this study were the usage of self-report measurement which could lead to potential bias of the subjects' responses. This study also did not involve any additional potential variables that could affect the association between fear of missing out and social media fatigue. **Future Research:** Future research should explore the influence of FoMo and SMF on other psychological aspects, such as privacy concerns and personality traits.

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