

FOMO in the Digital Age: A Study of Self-Esteem and Social Media Effects on North Sumatran Youth

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This study investigates the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in North Sumatran society, particularly among Generation Z, in relation to self-esteem and social media usage. The research employs a quantitative approach with a correlational survey design, involving a sample of 150 respondents aged 12-24 years from various regions in North Sumatra who are active users of social media platforms. The study utilizes three main questionnaires: FOMO scale, social media addiction scale, and self-esteem scale. Multiple regression analysis is used to determine the involvement of each independent variable (self-esteem and social media usage) in the dependent variable (FOMO). The results reveal that both self-esteem and social media usage have a significant positive influence on FOMO. Interestingly, higher self-esteem is found to be associated with increased FOMO, suggesting that self-esteem in this context may be contingent on social validation and can strengthen the desire for digital existence. The high use of social media platforms also reinforces a sense of connectedness and a desire to socialize, which, if unfulfilled, can lead to anxiety due to the fear of being left behind. The study highlights the importance of understanding the quality of self-esteem in the current cultural and digital context and the need for digital literacy based on Islamic values to promote critical awareness of social expectations manipulated in digital spaces. The findings have practical implications for creating strategies to improve the identity and psychological resilience of young people amidst the digital culture in North Sumatra.

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This study explores the digital behavior of Generation Z in North Sumatra and how their self-esteem and social media use contribute to the experience of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). By revealing that higher self-esteem may paradoxically increase FOMO in youth, this study provides new insights into how identity and validation are shaped in the digital age. It fills a gap in the local literature and suggests the urgency of promoting digital literacy with cultural and religious sensitivity. These findings are vital for educators, parents, and policymakers concerned about the psychological well-being of youth in an increasingly online world.



Introduction

The rapid revolution in information technology has revolutionized human social interaction, information acquisition, and self-expression. Today, social media has become an integral part of the digital lifestyle of Indonesians. By January 2025, the number of social media users is expected to reach 143 million, which is equivalent to 50.2% of the total population. Active connections have reached an astonishing 356 million, surpassing Indonesia's population and representing 125% of the total population of the country. Every day, the average user spends up to 7 hours and 38 minutes surfing the web. Some of the fundamental reasons that encourage Indonesians to be active on social media include filling spare time (58.9%), interacting with friends and family (57.1%), and following trending content on the Internet (48.8%) (Kemp., 2025).

The rapid development of social media has had a huge impact on psychological well-being and social interaction. One of the phenomena caused by it is the feeling of worry or fear of being left out of other people's social experiences, which is often seen on social media or called fear of missing out (FOMO) (Servidio, Soraci, Griffiths, Boca, & Demetrovics, 2024). FOMO encourages individuals to intensely observe the social activities of others, often sacrificing their personal comfort and balance in their lives (Mandala Putra et al., 2024).

McGinnis, (2023) Quoting from the New York Times version of Ahead of the Curve: Two Years at Harvard Business School, author Philip Delves Broughton, who graduated two years later, wrote:

"The college repeatedly reminded us that if we wanted to survive at HBS, the number one tip was not to be consumed by FOMO. We must choose what we want to do specifically. Then, do it without worrying too much about others. I mitigated FOMO by going to the library every day and reading newspapers to avoid getting caught up in my own thoughts. However, on campus, FOMO is like a stalker that poisons the mind."

To conclude, it is important to understand the dynamics of FOMO and its effectiveness in advancing prevention and intervention strategies to improve mental health in the digital age. FOMO is currently experienced by all social classes. FOMO is no longer a problem with a small percentage of people, but has become a mass disease that can infect everyone. Then, FOMO expanded to various parts of the world; this phenomenon is not only experienced by Americans but has become global as top celebrities are used by everyone from ordinary people to presidents. FOMO is now at the heart of a global conspiracy to influence the decisions we design (McGinnis, 2023).

Generation Z, born and raised in the digital age, faces a significant risk of developing FOMO. They are highly exposed to social media dynamics that demand constant connectedness and self-actualization through digital displays (aji & mas, 2025). Regarding psychological aspects, Arfianto et al. (2024) show that the higher the intensity of social media use, the more vulnerable a person is to experiencing a decrease in self-esteem (low self-esteem). The weak correlation suggests that social media activity is not the main cause of affecting young adults' self-esteem.

Self-esteem is a psychological factor that is closely related to a person's habit of experiencing FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). Individuals with low self-esteem usually have a strong desire to be accepted, recognized, and involved in social activities on social media, making them more vulnerable to experiencing FOMO (Syawalli, 2023). Santika and Budiarto (2025) found that low self-esteem plays an important role in creating feelings of helplessness when seeing other people's activities on social media that one cannot participate in. This is supported by Servidio et al. (2024), who confirmed that low self-esteem in the face of more intense social pressure is because it feels less valuable when not involved in trends or activities that are popular. The lower an individual's social self-esteem, the higher their tendency to experience FOMO. Generation Z or the post-millennial generation has a high tendency to experience FOMO because several characteristics of this generation form the basis for FOMO, such as under-influence, being always connected, and digital intuitiveness (Mandas & Silfiyah, 2022).

In the book *Self-Esteem: Research, Theory, and Practice*, Mruk (1995) Branden suggests that deficiencies in various aspects of self-esteem can lead to neurotic behavior at more extreme levels, such as moral depravity. He elaborated that deficiencies in the four main pillars of self-esteem, namely self-awareness, integrity, responsibility, and self-acceptance, can make a person unable to value himself. This can increase the risk of insecurity, self-neglect, and other negative behaviors, such as dependency, excessive power seeking, or even violent and cruel behavior. Low self-confidence often stems from not fulfilling one or more of these foundations, such as the inability to realize one's own needs and worth, lack of courage to acknowledge one's decisions, or difficulty in genuinely accepting and loving oneself.

A lack of self-confidence can protect a person from social influences and unrealistic self-views, as they are more likely to be honest about their abilities. In addition, directing attention to improving natural talents creates a strong and lasting sense of confidence. However, if confidence is too low, it can prevent individuals from taking important steps, adapting, and pursuing opportunities because of self-doubt (Chamorro-premuzic, 2013).

To provide help to increase self-esteem, it is necessary to use a philosophical foundation, especially regarding efforts to understand human nature associated with the process of guidance and counseling services. In relation to self-esteem, one should understand that the nature of self-esteem is not innate but is formed from parenting and the

environment; therefore, if someone is experiencing low self-esteem, it is possible to improve. The psychological foundation relates to an understanding of the behavior of individuals who are the target of guidance and counseling services, including (a) motives and motivation, (b) formation and environment, (c) individual development, (d) learning, and (d) personality. In this case, someone with low self-esteem needs to understand that this is related to motives, where self-esteem affects the urge to do something. It should also be understood that self-esteem affects motivation and is related to the motivation of a person to do something (Increase & Self, 2014). One of the factors that influence FOMO is not only self-esteem but also social media.

Social media serves not only as a tool for communication and entertainment but also as a platform that allows individuals to shape and represent themselves. However, the self-representation displayed on social media is often the best version that does not fully depict reality. This can trigger feelings of a lack of confidence or dissatisfaction with oneself. In addition, excessive social comparison with the seemingly idealized lives of others on these platforms can undermine self-confidence and create pressure to meet unrealistic expectations (Egi Regita et al., 2024).

In recent years, the use of social media in Indonesia has increased significantly, especially after the covid-19 pandemic that triggered the digitization process. The impact of this phenomenon is felt not only by students but also by the general public, including in North Sumatra (Lumbantobing, 2022). One of the psychological effects that arise is the increased feeling of fear of missing out (FOMO), which causes many people to feel anxious or afraid of missing information, resulting in a decrease in self-esteem (Daffanur et al., 2025). Aji Septrian (2025) indicated that FOMO can contribute to social media addiction, especially in the use of platforms such as Instagram.

In the North Sumatra region, the massive development of digital technology has changed the social interaction patterns of the younger generation, including shaping social expectations and standards of success through social media (Taib et al., 2024). This phenomenon has also led to the psychological effect of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), which is characterized by anxiety because they feel that other people are experiencing valuable experiences that they did not experience or participate in (Fitri et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to psychologically analyze how internal factors, such as self-esteem, and external factors, such as the frequency of social media use, contribute to the FOMO tendency. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to be more prone to feelings of anxiety and the need to stay digitally connected to avoid being excluded from other people's social activities. However, excessive social media use also serves to reinforce social expectations and create an image of a perfect life that elicits negative social comparisons.

Although several previous studies have raised the issue of Missing Out (FOMO) among young people in this region, most are still limited to the local context or certain institutions, with a relatively narrow coverage area and diversity of respondents. This research aims to fill this gap by reaching a wider and more representative distribution of respondents in various regions of North Sumatra. This allows for a more thorough and contextual identification of FOMO patterns, as well as providing a more accurate picture of the contribution of internal factors such as self-esteem and external factors such as the intensity of social media use to FOMO tendencies. Thus, this study aims to conduct an empirical analysis of the relationship between self-esteem and social media use on FOMO in North Sumatra society. The results of this study are expected to provide new insights into the psychosocial dynamics of young people in the digital age and a basis for preventive interventions in the fields of education, mental health, and digital literacy.

Literature Review

In recent years, FOMO has attracted the attention of researchers, especially in the digital era. Although FOMO is not a new phenomenon, the presence of artificial intelligence technology has made it a cause for concern, especially when it comes to self-esteem. FOMO is characterized by a strong feeling of being constantly connected to others and what they are doing (Przybylski et al., 2013). These feelings are manifested in the form of actions. Self-determination theory (SDT) can explain individual motivation. The three psychological components that underlie a person's psychological needs are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. FOMO is believed to result from a lack of fulfillment of these three needs.

Self-esteem is a strong, basic human need that helps individuals face life's challenges. According to Branden (1992) in his book says that self-esteem has survival value. This can be interpreted as whether or not an individual survives is determined by the high-low self-esteem he has. Self-esteem is the overall way in which individuals evaluate themselves (Santrock, 2011). Evaluation here is the perception of the value that a person has as a human being, their success, and their achievements. Negative perceptions of a person describe deficiencies, feelings of inferiority, or insecurity.

Individuals with low self-esteem are characterized by low self-esteem, always describe themselves negatively, feel less capable, feel worthless, and feel less able to establish social relationships. Conversely, according to Branden (1992),

individuals with high self-esteem are always optimistic, able to face problems, resilient, have good self-confidence, are not easily discouraged, and are able to build interpersonal relationships. This means that individuals with high self-esteem have a positive view of themselves, believing that they are able to do everything that is good, productive, and able to build and adjust well in a new environment. Ziller, R. C., Hagey, J., Smith, M., & Long, (1992) says that self-evaluation is largely formed within a social framework. They added that changes in a person's social environment affect their self-esteem. This is almost the same as what Guindon (2009) said, that self-esteem consists of feelings of worth and acceptance that individuals acquire and develop as a consequence of awareness of competence and feedback from outside the individual. This shows that self-esteem can be well formed if there is self-acceptance and a sense of appreciation obtained from the environment, so that the individual can carry out his role in society and live a productive life. It should be noted that individuals, especially individuals, form self-esteem from the results of social interactions in the form of acceptance, appreciation, and understanding of others. The greater the appreciation received, the higher the self-esteem.

Materials and Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlation-based survey approach (correlational survey) (Assayakurrohim et al., 2023) to examine the fear of missing out (FOMO) in North Sumatra in terms of self-esteem and social media. The independent variables in this study were self-esteem and social media, while the dependent variable was the fear of missing out (FOMO).

The research population is the general public from various regions in North Sumatra, aged 12 to 24 years, and active users of social media such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, or Shopee. This age range was chosen because it represents a generation that has grown up in the midst of technological advances, the Internet, and social media, with individualistic and egocentric tendencies that are reflected in their habit of using social media as a means of socializing without space and time limits (Fauziah & Aini, 2024).

From this population, a sample of 150 respondents was selected using a purposive sampling technique, which is a sampling technique with certain considerations set by the researcher (Sugiono, 2017). The criteria that researchers set include: 1) aged 12-24 years; 2) living in North Sumatra; 3) active social media users for at least the last 6 months. Techniques used by researchers to determine respondents who meet the criteria as a sample. A sample size of 150 people is considered adequate for correlational analysis at the provincial level. This is in line with the research of Memon et al. (2025), which states that the sample in purposive sampling is oriented towards the adequacy of information, not the size of the population. Respondents were spread across 11 districts, namely North Padang Lawas, Mandailing Natal, Simalungun, North Nias, Asahan, Karo, Batu Bara, Langkat, Deli Serdang, Serdang Bedagai, and North Labuhanbatu, and 2 cities, namely Medan City and Pematang City.

The research instrument consisted of three main questionnaires using a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree) (Erinsyah et al., 2024). The questionnaires used include: 1). FOMO was developed by Syawalli (2023), with a reliability level based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.927. 2. Social media addiction was adapted from Rahardjo et al. (2022), with a reliability level based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.888. 3. Self-esteem was adapted from Syawalli (2023), with a reliability level of 0.897 based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

In addition to the reliability test, the instrument was also tested for construct validity by testing the correlation between items in each scale as well as the total item correlation. All items showed significant correlations that met the requirements of construct validity; therefore, they were suitable for use in measurement. The instrument consists of three scales: FOMO, self-esteem, and social media use, each of which has undergone construct validation based on the blueprint results. Table 1 summarizes the indicators, statement numbers, and number of items for each of the variables.

Table 1. Summary of Blue Print Results of Reduction of FOMO Scale Items, Self-Esteem, and Social Media Use.

No	Variable	Indicator / Aspect	Statement No.	Number of Items
1	Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) (Adapted from Syawalli (2023))	Discomfort when not engaging with others	1, 2, 3, 7, 11	5
		Social behavior based on fear of being left behind	6, 10, 13	3
		Rejection or resistance to social pressure	4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15	7

		Total Items	15	
2	Self-Esteem (Adapted from Syawalli (2023))	Dependence on social validation	1, 3, 5, 7, 10	5
		Feeling of not being oneself for the sake of acceptance	2, 4, 6, 8, 9	5
		Total Items		10
3	Social Media Usage (adapted from Rahardjo et al. (2022))	Frequency and intensity of use	1, 2, 3, 4	4
		Use as an emotion regulation tool	5, 6, 7, 8	4
		Neglect of other activities due to social media	9	1
		Total Items		9
Total				34

Data collection procedures were carried out online by distributing surveys using Google Forms. The questionnaire was distributed to friends and family from various regions in North Sumatra through social media and student groups, as well as to junior/senior high school students. Before filling out the questionnaire, respondents were given information regarding the purpose of the study and a statement of availability (informed consent).

Data were collected over a period of one month. This study uses multiple regression data analysis techniques to determine the involvement of each independent variable in the dependent variable. To ensure the validity of the analysis results, the researchers conducted classical assumption tests, such as normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity (Field, 2018).

Results

This study began with validity and reliability tests to ensure that the instruments used could consistently measure constructs. The results show the reliability coefficient value with the Cronbach's alpha method as follows: Variable FOMO reliability coefficient: 0,740. Social media variable reliability coefficient: 0,790. The self-esteem variable reliability coefficient was 0,736. All of these values were above the minimum threshold of 0.60, indicating that the instrument was reliable.

A classical assumption test was then conducted to ensure that the regression model was feasible. The normality test was performed using the one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with the asymptotic. Sig results in a value of $p=0.200 > 0.10$, indicating that the residuals are statistically normally distributed; therefore, the normality assumption is met.

Table 2. Summary of Multicollinearity Test Results

Variable	Collinearity statistic		Description
	Tolerance	VIF	
Self-esteem → FOMO	0,745	1,343	No <i>Multicollinearity</i>
Social media → FOMO	0,745	1,343	

As shown in Table 2, the results of the multicollinearity test on the tolerance value of $0.745 > 0.10$ and the VIF value of $1.343 < 10$ indicate that there is no excessive correlation between the independent variables. This shows that the independent variables do not overlap statistically and make different contributions to the models. The classical assumption test for heteroscedasticity using the Glejser method resulted in a significance value for variable X (1) (self-esteem) of 0.458 and X (2) (social media) of 0.621, which are greater than 0.05. This indicates that the regression model does not show symptoms of heteroscedasticity; as a result, the precision of the model estimation is considered good and unbiased because of inconsistent residual variances.

Table 3. Summary of Simultaneous Test Results (F Test) Multiple Regression Models

Variable	Coefficient F	R	R²	Description
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Self-Esteem & social media → FOMO	61,503	0,448	0,456	P<0,01 (0,000) Very Significant
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In Table 3, the results of the multiple regression correlation between self-esteem and social media on FOMO have a simultaneous effect with a significant value of $p = 0.000 < 0.01$ and an F count of $61.503 > F \text{ table} = 4.75$. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.448 indicates that the regression model used is quite stable and does not experience overfitting, $R^2 = 0.448$ resulting from Model Summary of 0.456, which means that 45.6% of the variability in fear of being left behind (FOMO) can be explained by social media and self-esteem variables. The remaining 54.4% was influenced by other factors outside the model that were not examined in this study.

Table 4. Summary of Partial Test Results (t Test) Multiple Regression Models

Variable	T Count	T Table	Sig.(p)	Description
Self-esteem (X ₁)	6,938	2,60969	0,000	Significant
Social media (X ₂)	3,962	2,60969	0,000	Significant

The partial test results in Table 4 show that self-esteem has a significant effect on FOMO, with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.01, and a t-count of 6.938, which is greater than the t-table value of 2.60969. Social media has a significant effect on FOMO, with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.01, and a t-count of 3.962, which is less than the t-table value of 2.60969. The regression equation obtained the value of B (unstandardized coefficient): $Y = 10.075 + 0.774X_1 + 0.380 X_2$.

The equation can be interpreted as follows: every increase in self-esteem by one unit will increase FOMO by 0.774, and every increase in social media use by one unit will increase FOMO by 0.380. The constant value of 10.075 shows the value of FOMO when social media and self-esteem are both zero. Therefore, both variables have a positive effect on FOMO. This finding contradicts previous research, which usually shows that FOMO is experienced more by people with low self-esteem. This discrepancy suggests that the relationship between FOMO and self-esteem may be changing, especially in the digital social media context of today's youth.

Discussion

1. The Effect of Self-Esteem on FOMO

The results of partial regression analysis show that Self-Esteem has a positive and significant influence on Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), with a calculated t value = $6.938 > t \text{ table} = 2.60969$ and a significance value of $p = 0.000 < 0.01$. The regression coefficient shows that each increase in self-esteem by one unit will increase the FOMO score by 0.774. This finding indicates that the higher one's self-esteem, the more likely one is to experience FOMO. This result is counterintuitive, as in many studies, high self-esteem is associated with psychological stability and low social anxiety.

This finding contradicts a number of previous studies, such as those by Syawalli, (2023) and Servidio et al., (2024), which state that low self-esteem is a major factor in FOMO. In their study, individuals with low self-esteem in their study tended to be more sensitive to social pressure and social comparison, making them more prone to experiencing the fear of being left behind. However, these differences suggest that the relationship between FOMO and self-esteem is not always linear or complex. Therefore, further explanations are required through contextual, theoretical, and methodological examinations.

One possible explanation is the influence of the collectivistic culture that is dominant in North Sumatra. In a collectivist culture, a person's self-esteem tends to be shaped by social recognition and acceptance rather than by stable personal beliefs. Coopersmith and Ardaningrum & Savira (2022) mention that one aspect of self-esteem is significance, which is an individual's feeling that he is valuable when his presence is recognized and appreciated by the environment. In a collectivist culture, social recognition and acceptance, rather than strong personal beliefs, are more likely to shape a person's self-esteem. Anggraini (2021) also emphasizes that the need for self-esteem is often fulfilled by a person to gain recognition from the people around him. Therefore, in this context, the higher a person's self-esteem (because they feel recognized by the environment), the greater the pressure to maintain that recognition, one of which is by following social activities seen on social media. As a result, FOMO occurs when a person feels better about themselves.

In addition to cultural factors, methodological factors may also be an important reason why the results of this study differ. This study used a general self-esteem measurement tool without distinguishing whether a person's self-esteem

is stable or depends on recognition from others. In fact, according to Kószegi et al., (2022), the condition that often occurs is that a person appears to have high self-esteem, but is actually fragile because it is very dependent on social acceptance, which this condition is referred to as a form of "insecurity." That is, a high self-esteem score does not necessarily indicate strong self-confidence. It is possible that the individual has contingent self-esteem, which is confidence built on praise, "likes" or social media attention. If this is true, it is natural for high self-esteem to be positively correlated with FOMO. Therefore, the limitations of this measurement tool should be considered as a factor that could potentially cause the findings of this study to differ.

The concept of contingent self-esteem further elucidates this phenomenon. Crocker and Park (2004) stated that individuals with contingent self-esteem feel confident only when they receive external social validation, such as comments, number of followers, or engagement on social media. They appear confident but rely heavily on the opinions of others; therefore, they are more prone to stress if they do not receive enough attention. This is in line with the findings of Hasna Farida, Weni Endahing Warni, & Lutfi Arya, (2021) by Tice that individuals who have high self-esteem aim to use social media to achieve higher social status. In this context, FOMO is triggered by the desire to appear successful or existent, as they fear missing out on social moments that could demonstrate their involvement or success.

Gori et al. (2023) confirmed that the relationship between self-esteem and FOMO is mediated by various psychosocial factors, such as emotional attachment style and compulsive digital behavior. This suggests that the relationship between self-esteem and FOMO is not always linear but can be influenced by mediating factors such as emotional attachment and surrogate digital behavior. The context of Generation Z is also an important aspect that needs to be considered, given that this group is closely related to the digital self-image. Aprianti & Wendari (2023) state that Gen Z shapes their identity and self-esteem through the way they are perceived in digital spaces. Therefore, even individuals with seemingly high self-esteem may experience psychological pressure to continue appearing active, existent, and relevant on social media.

This phenomenon reflects Indonesia's collectivist culture, where social acceptance and interconnection are considered fundamental components of personal identity (Daffanur et al., 2025; Savitri & Psikologi, 2019). In such a culture, a person feels confident because they can conform to the group's expectations rather than solely because of their self-confidence. Therefore, a person with high self-confidence may feel more motivated to stay connected in social networks, and if they are unable to do so, they may feel alienated, which then results in a fear of missing out (FOMO).

From a psychological theory perspective, Self-Determination Theory also provides an additional explanation. According to Nuralieva et al. (2024), when basic needs such as relatedness (feeling connected to others) are not authentically fulfilled, the resulting social pressure manifests as FOMO. In a digital society, this need is often met through social media, which does not always provide meaningful relationships with others.

Overall, the researcher argues that collectivistic culture, the contingent type of self-esteem, and the limitations of the measurement tools used may explain the positive relationship between self-esteem and FOMO in this study. In addition, these findings suggest that high-low self-esteem alone is not enough to explain FOMO; rather, the sources that shape self-esteem and its social context are crucial. Therefore, further research should be conducted using tools that can distinguish the type of self-esteem, whether it is stable or contingent, incorporate mediating variables such as the need for social validation or social comparison, and enhance the cultural approach in looking at the dynamics of self-esteem in a digital society.

2. The Effect of Social Media on FOMO

The results of partial regression analysis show that the use of social media has a positive and significant effect on Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), with a calculated t value = 3.962 > t table = 2.60969 and a significance value of $p = 0.000 < 0.01$. The regression coefficient indicates that each increase in social media use by one unit increases the FOMO score by 0.380 after processing the self-esteem variable. This finding strengthens the hypothesis that high engagement with social media contributes significantly to the emergence of FOMO, particularly in younger individuals who tend to be highly active in the digital world.

This finding is in line with various previous studies, which found that social media has a role in triggering FOMO because it always shows other people's activities in real time (Elhai et al., 2021). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook present idealized and curated representations of social life, which can encourage unhealthy social comparisons. Khare et.al (2025) explain that social media platforms provide social status symbols, such as the number of "likes" or followers, which are very attractive to people with a high need for social recognition. The more often a person sees other people's activities that look successful or fun, the more likely they are to feel left behind or not exist enough, which can ultimately lead to FOMO.

Dewi et al. (2022) revealed that the frequency of using social media platforms is related to an increased desire to connect (connectedness need), which, if not fulfilled, can cause social pressure and fear of missing out. This is particularly pertinent to this study, given that the majority of the study participants were Generation Z, who are known to have a heavy reliance on the digital world as a tool for existence, social expression, and the search for recognition.

Furthermore, McGinnis (2023), in his work entitled *Fear of Missing Out: Practical Decision-Making in a World Full of Options*, states that FOMO thrives in a modern society that offers too many choices and expectations, especially those demonstrated through social media platforms. He explains that the greater the exposure to the variety of social options and opportunities available online, the greater the mental pressure to not miss out on them. In this case, social media serves not only as a means of communication but also as a social reflection that increases anxiety about missing out on opportunities in social, career, and emotional aspects.

From a psychological theory perspective, these results can be viewed through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). According to Niemiec and Ryan (2009), the need for relatedness is a fundamental psychological need for humans. However, when social connections are only obtained from superficial and fast-paced digital interactions, there is a strong drive to always appear, be present, and look active. When these expectations are not met, social anxiety manifests as FOMO (Nuralieva et al., 2024).

These findings also warrant an in-depth consideration of how social media structures and algorithms systematically create a social environment that places users under existential pressure, especially among the younger generation. Social media is now more than just a means of communication; it has established new social standards, where the inability to keep up with trends is perceived as a failure to maintain one's position in the digital social hierarchy (Asyahidda & Azis, 2024). Information displayed in real time through social media exposes individuals to various activities and events, which in turn creates a fear of being left behind on what is being discussed (Nasr et al., 2023).

The impact of social media on FOMO does not occur in isolation but is also influenced by individuals' psychological and social states. For example, social performance orientation and comparison with others can amplify the impact of social media on FOMO, as revealed by Servidio et al. (2024) in their mediation model. In this context, individuals who form their identities through social media are more susceptible to experiencing FOMO when they are unable to meet the social expectations formed by digital platforms because of the constant urge to follow information and online engagement (Wijaya et al., 2025).

Overall, the influence of social media on FOMO is multidimensional, involving psychological, structural, and cultural aspects. Especially in today's digital culture, social media is no longer just a communication tool but has become a performative space where individuals build, display, and maintain their social identity. One of the main factors that reinforces the influence of FOMO in today's digital culture is the bias that people have about how important digital social interactions are, caused by a lack of critical awareness of virtual reality.

3. The Influence of *Self Esteem* and Social Media on FOMO

The simultaneous test results (F test) in Table 3, found that self-esteem and social media usage have a significant influence on Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in Generation Z in North Sumatra. The calculated F value of 61.503 with a significance of $p = 0.000$ (<0.01) indicates that this multiple regression model is highly significant, which means that an increase in social media usage and self-esteem together in North Sumatra can increase the tendency of individuals to experience FOMO.

This finding is in line with the research conducted by Kurniawati (2022), which shows that people with high self-esteem but who depend on recognition from others are still at risk of experiencing FOMO, especially if they frequently use social media. This research also highlights the importance of understanding the quality of self-esteem in the current cultural and digital context, rather than just considering how high it is overall. The findings suggest that how self-esteem is shaped—based on internal values or external expectations—strongly influences the likelihood of FOMO.

Social psychology theory can be used to explain the relationship between FOMO and self-esteem on social media platforms. According to the contingent self-esteem model proposed by Crocker and Park (2004), individuals with contingent self-esteem rely heavily on social feedback as a source of self-esteem, such as likes and follows. When social media becomes the main place for validation, externally based self-esteem can interact with social media effectively to create pressure to stay connected, recognized, and seen to exist. This is the basis of the FOMO.

Cahyani and Pangestuti (2023) revealed that excessive exposure to social content on digital platforms leads to social comparison, which can increase the likelihood of FOMO. Social media serves as the main arena where people seek

validation and connection, two things that are also strongly associated with fundamental psychological needs according to the Self-Determination Theory.

Meanwhile, Mandas and Silfiyah (2022) showed that having high social self-esteem does not necessarily protect one from FOMO, especially if the individual is sensitive to social expectations and status on digital platforms. In this context, active participation in social interactions and the desire to maintain one's self-image on social media can compel one to keep watching and following the activities of others, which in turn can trigger FOMO.

This finding can be linked to research by Servidio et al. (2024), which shows that several components, including social comparison, digital self-image, and the desire to maintain an online social position, are responsible for the interaction between self-esteem and social media on FOMO. This is in line with Yunarti (2024), who stated that it arises from the need to stay involved in digital social networks due to anxiety about social exclusion. Thus, when people create their self-esteem through social media, they become highly vulnerable to existential pressure, which causes FOMO as a psychological reaction.

In this context, FOMO becomes a bridge between social anxiety, contingent self-esteem, and social media addiction, as confirmed by Patria and Zulfiningrum (2024), who found that FOMO can mediate the relationship between psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression and problematic social media use.

Meanwhile, from a psychological perspective, Social Comparison Theory according to Festinger (1962) and Swari and Tobing (2024) explains that individuals utilize information from social media to understand themselves while comparing their lives with the lives of others. If a person's self-esteem is low or fluctuating, this social comparison can lead to stronger feelings of being left behind, which increases the influence of social media on FOMO.

Thus, the relationship between self-esteem and social media does not stand alone in influencing FOMO but can reinforce each other, especially in the context of a digital society that places online presence as part of social identity. Individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to seek social recognition through social media. If they do not find it, they may experience feelings of inadequacy, fear of missing out, or even anxiety about social exclusion from the group. Therefore, efforts to reduce FOMO should involve two approaches: improving self-esteem based on internal and authentic values and promoting digital literacy that emphasizes critical awareness of how social expectations are manipulated in digital spaces.

Conclusion

This study shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between self-esteem and social media usage on Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among generation Z in North Sumatra. Partial analysis results indicate that both independent variables, namely self-esteem and social media, also have a significant impact on FOMO. Interestingly, self-esteem, which is often considered a protector against FOMO, functions positively in this North Sumatra study, suggesting that self-esteem is contingent or dependent on social validation and can strengthen the desire to exist in the digital world, thus potentially increasing the risk of FOMO.

The high use of social media platforms also reinforces a sense of connectedness and a desire to socialize, which, if unfulfilled, can lead to anxiety due to the fear of being left behind. In a collectivistic society like North Sumatra, where social values and group acceptance are highly valued, the combination of internal motivation (unstable self-esteem) and external pressure (social expectations in digital media) increases the tendency of FOMO. These findings also show that building self-esteem alone is not enough if the quality of self-esteem is based on social existence in the digital space. These findings have real benefits for people in North Sumatra, especially in terms of creating strategies to improve the identity and psychological resilience of young people in the midst of digital culture.

The practical implication of these results is the need to strengthen self-esteem that is stable and based on internal values, not just social imaging. Educational institutions and families play an important role in shaping a healthy self-identity, especially through spiritual approaches and moral values that do not depend on external recognition. In addition, digital literacy based on Islamic values is important to promote so that individuals are not trapped in the illusion of social comparison on social media.

Future research should consider mediating variables such as the desire for social validation, comparisons with others, or a focus on social performance to elucidate the psychological processes connecting self-esteem, social media platforms, and the fear of missing out. Employing longitudinal approaches or qualitative methods is also recommended to provide a more detailed summary of the individual psychological changes.

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