

Correlation Study: Peer Relationship Quality and Anxiety Due to Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

In the digital era, adolescents are increasingly exposed to social media and online interactions, which increases the risk of experiencing Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), namely the anxiety that they are missing out on the social experiences of others. This study aims to determine the relationship between peer relationship quality and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) anxiety in adolescents. Using a quantitative cross-sectional method, involving 93 students selected by random sampling. Data were collected using the FQS and FoMOS questionnaires, and analyzed using the chi-square test. The results showed that the majority of respondents (73.1%) had a low quality of peer relationships. The level of FoMO was categorized as low (41.9%), moderate (37.6%), and high (20.4%). There is a significant relationship between the two variables ($p=0.025$). High-quality friendships are proven to be able to reduce FoMO levels and act as a psychological protector.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are an age group undergoing various psychosocial changes: identity, emotion, social relations, and cognitive development. This development requires adolescents to interact more with their social environment to seek identity and recognition. In the digital era, adolescents are increasingly exposed to social media and online interactions, which expands the space for the emergence of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) – an anxiety that they are missing out on the social experiences of others. This phenomenon is exacerbated by exposure to information from social media, which triggers individuals to constantly connect and monitor other people's activities so as not to feel left behind (Yusuf dkk., 2023).

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a psychological phenomenon where a person is haunted by excessive anxiety, fear, or worry that others are experiencing valuable moments, pleasant experiences, or the latest trends, while they are not participating. A person experiencing FoMO shows several distinctive behavioral characteristics, such as the inability to detach from gadgets, a very high intensity in checking social media notifications, and an obsession with the statuses or posts of their peers. This compulsive behavior is driven by a deep need to gain validation and a sense of social connectedness in the virtual world (Marpaung, 2024). In addition, the emergence of this phenomenon is closely related to weak self-control and the individual's inability to regulate their social expectations (Yulya, 2022).

FoMO has been identified as one of the factors affecting adolescent mental health, including anxiety (Wibowo et al., 2024). The compulsive urge to constantly monitor other people's lives in cyberspace ultimately has a negative impact on mental health. Adolescents with high levels of FoMO often compare their life reality with the "front stage" of other people's seemingly perfect lives on social media, thereby triggering feelings of inferiority and anxiety about their social existence (Ali et al., 2023). High-level FOMO has been proven to trigger profound feelings of loneliness and become a gateway to social media addiction, especially in individuals in early adulthood (Luth & Maryam, 2024). Uncontrolled FoMO conditions have a direct destructive impact on mental health, where individuals become highly vulnerable to chronic stress and social anxiety. This multi-layered anxiety is also proven to have a highly significant relationship with low self-esteem, where individuals with negative self-evaluations are much more vulnerable to experiencing FOMO, especially among Generation Z (Fitri et al., 2024).

The dynamics of FoMO in adolescents cannot be separated from the role of their closest social environment, namely peers. Peer factors – including the quality of close friendships, social support, mutual trust, and emotional closeness among peers – are becoming increasingly significant in the context of FoMO. The fundamental human desire to be socially accepted (need to belong) makes someone afraid of being left behind by their group. The fear of being excluded from the peer group manifests into FOMO, which can ultimately threaten mental well-being (Luth & Maryam, 2024). Several studies show that peer conformity (friends encouraging an individual to participate in social/social media activities

to be accepted in the group) positively correlates with FoMO (Visanti & Qonitatin, 2024).

However, some studies place more emphasis on conformity or pressure, rather than specifically on the quality of peer relationships (closeness, support, trust), thus leaving a gap in understanding how positive or negative peer relationship quality moderates or affects FoMO-induced anxiety among adolescents in Indonesia. In fact, healthy and supportive friendship relations function as a crucial psychological "protector" (protective factor) for adolescents to ward off various mental pressures, including stress originating from the digital environment (Lu & Lusianawati, 2023). When someone with immature self-control (Yulya, 2022) and low self-esteem (Fitri et al., 2024) sees their peers having fun without them, that psychological threat will very easily emerge.

In Indonesia, the adolescent mental health situation has shown a high level of urgency. Data from the 2022 National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS) revealed that around 34.9% (equivalent to 15.5 million) of Indonesian adolescents aged 10-17 years experienced mental health problems in the last 12 months, while 5.5% (2.45 million) experienced a diagnostic mental disorder (Kemen PPPA, 2023). Of this number, anxiety disorders are among the most frequently reported (Kemenkes RI, 2023). On the other hand, many adolescents have not adequately accessed mental health services, and psychological problems are often related to social factors, including peers.

Responding to this phenomenon, policy efforts in Indonesia are now paying attention to adolescent mental health as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 "Good Health and Well-Being" which targets improving mental health and well-being by 2030 (Bappenas, 2024). Indonesia's National Research Master Plan (RIRN) also includes adolescent mental health and psychosocial literacy issues as one of the research priorities so that policies and interventions can be developed on an evidence basis. Therefore, this research is important to examine the effect of peer relationship quality on FoMO-induced anxiety in adolescents at SMA N 1 Bergas, as part of an effort to understand protective and risk social factors, thereby supporting the achievement of SDG targets and RIRN priorities for adolescent mental health in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a psychological phenomenon where a person is haunted by excessive anxiety, fear, or worry that others are experiencing valuable moments, pleasant experiences, or the latest trends, while they are not participating. This phenomenon is exacerbated by exposure to information from social media, which triggers individuals to constantly connect and monitor other people's activities so as not to feel left behind (Yusuf dkk., 2023). The emergence of this phenomenon is closely related to weak self-control and the individual's inability to regulate their social expectations (Yulya, 2022). Characteristics and Main Impacts: 1). Connection with Self-Esteem: FOMO is not just curiosity, but layered anxiety where individuals feel their lives are "lacking" compared to others. This anxiety is proven to have a highly significant

relationship with low self-esteem, where individuals with negative self-evaluations are much more vulnerable to experiencing FOMO, especially among Generation Z (Fitri et al., 2024); 2) Chain Impact on Mental Health: Social media is the main catalyst that exacerbates FOMO. A person experiencing FoMO shows several distinctive behavioral characteristics, such as the inability to detach from gadgets, a very high intensity in checking social media notifications, and an obsession with the statuses or posts of their peers. This compulsive behavior is driven by a deep need to gain validation and a sense of social connectedness in the virtual world (Marpaung, 2024).

The compulsive urge to constantly monitor other people's lives in cyberspace ultimately has a negative impact on mental health. High-level FOMO has been proven to trigger profound feelings of loneliness and become a gateway to social media addiction, especially in individuals in early adulthood (Luth & Maryam, 2024). Uncontrolled FoMO conditions have a direct destructive impact on mental health, where individuals become highly vulnerable to chronic stress and social anxiety. Adolescents with high levels of FoMO often compare their life reality with the "front stage" of other people's seemingly perfect lives on social media, thereby triggering feelings of inferiority and anxiety about their social existence (Ali et al., 2023).

Peer relationship quality is an individual's subjective evaluation of how positive, supportive, and safe their friendship relations are in the real world. High-quality peer relationships are characterized by mutual trust, emotional closeness, open communication, as well as minimal conflict and alienation within the group (Amirah, 2023). Peers (peer group) refer to a group of individuals who share similar ages, maturity levels, social statuses, or interests. Interactions that occur within this group create communication patterns that mutually influence each other psychologically and socially in daily life (Dani, T. A., & Kurniawan, 2024). Characteristics and Main Roles:1). Source of Emotional Support: Peers provide space for acceptance, empathy, and appreciation. The presence of emotional support from peers is proven to be a crucial factor that can increase psychological stability and shape positive self-confidence in individuals, especially in the age range of adolescence to adulthood (A. Mulyadi & Dewi, 2023);2) Identity and Character Formation: Through intense interaction in groups, individuals learn to recognize social norms, cultural values, and environmental expectations. Peers serve as a mirror for self-evaluation, thus strongly influencing how a person's character is formed and how they adapt to norms in society (Dani, T. A., & Kurniawan, 2024).

The quality of friendship relations in general is measured through three main dimensions of peer attachment, namely trust, communication, and alienation. Healthy and supportive friendship relations function as a crucial psychological "protector" (protective factor) for adolescents to ward off various mental pressures, including stress originating from the digital environment (Lu & Lusianawati, 2023).

If drawn together, FOMO often stems from dynamics with peers. The fundamental human desire to be socially accepted (need to belong) makes someone afraid of being left behind by their group. When someone with

immature self-control (Yulya, 2022) and low self-esteem (Fitri et al., 2024) sees their peers having fun without them, that psychological threat emerges. The fear of being excluded from the peer group manifests into FOMO, which can ultimately threaten mental well-being (Luth & Maryam, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. Research Subjects: Adolescents aged 12-18 years taken from high school students totaling 93 students using random sampling method. Data will be collected through: Questionnaires: Using the Friendship Quality Scale (FQS) instrument for peer relationship quality and the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS) for anxiety due to FoMO. Relationship analysis was carried out using simple linear regression tests to see the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research has been carried out at SMA N 1 Bergas in December 2025 with 93 respondents. The characteristics of the Respondents can be seen from the following table:

Table 1. Distribution of Respondent Characteristics by Age and Gender

| Yes | Characteristics | Quantity | Percentage (%) |
|-----|-----------------|----------|----------------|
| 1. | Gender | | |
| | Male | 44 | 47,3 |
| | Women | 49 | 52,7 |
| | Total | 93 | 100 |
| 2. | Age | | |
| | 14 th | 3 | 3,2 |
| | 15 th | 14 | 15,1 |
| | 16 th | 24 | 25,8 |
| | 17 th | 30 | 32,3 |
| | 18 th | 20 | 21,5 |
| | 19 th | 2 | 2,2 |
| | Total | 93 | 100,0 |

Table 2. Distribution of Respondent Frequency Based on the Quality of Peer Relationships in Adolescents at SMA N 1 Bergas

| Categories | Quantity | Percentage (%) |
|------------|----------|----------------|
| Medium | 68 | 73,1 |
| Height | 25 | 26,9 |
| Total | 93 | 100 |

Table 3. Distribution of Respondent Frequency Based on Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in Adolescents at SMA N 1 Bergas

| Categories | Quantity | Percentage (%) |
|------------|----------|----------------|
| Low | 39 | 42 |
| Medium | 35 | 37,6 |

| | | |
|--------|----|------|
| Height | 19 | 20,4 |
| Total | 93 | 100 |

Table 4. The Relationship between Peer Relationship Quality Function and Anxiety due to Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in Adolescents at SMA N 1 Bergas

| Quality Hub.Peer | Anxiety due to Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) | | | Total(%) | p value |
|------------------|---|------------|------------|----------|---------|
| | Low (%) | Medium (%) | Height (%) | | |
| Low | 23 (33,8) | 28 (41,2) | 17 (25,0) | 68(100) | 0,025 |
| Height | 16 (64,0) | 7(28) | 2 (8) | 25 (100) | |
| Total | 39 (41,9) | 35 (37,6) | 19 (20,4) | 93 (100) | |

The statistical test results in this study indicate a p-value of 0.025 ($p < 0.05$), which confirms that there is a significant relationship between Peer Relationship Quality and anxiety due to Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in high school adolescents. This finding indicates that the dynamics of social relationships experienced by adolescents in the real world, especially with peers, are closely related to their anxiety levels regarding missing out on information or social moments. This result is in line with findings affirming that social support and the quality of peer interaction serve as crucial factors that can affect adolescent psychological vulnerability, including the tendency to experience FoMO in the digital era (Marfita et al., 2024).

Based on the descriptive analysis of the Peer Relationship Quality variable, the majority of respondents are in the low category, which is 68 students (73.1%), while the rest are in the high category, which is 25 students (26.9%). This high figure in the low category indicates that most high school students in this research population may experience challenges in building intimacy, trust, or supportive communication with their friends in the school environment. During adolescence, peers are the main social context where individuals seek identity and validation, so suboptimal relationship quality can create a gap in fulfilling their basic psychological needs (Delgado, 2022). The results of this study are in line with Self-Determination Theory which states that the need for relatedness is a basic human psychological need. When this need is not optimally fulfilled, individuals will try to seek it through various means, including intensely monitoring peer activities through social media, which ultimately increases the risk of FoMO (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In the anxiety variable due to Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), the data show a fairly scattered distribution, where the low category dominates with 39 students (41.9%), followed by the moderate category with 35 students (37.6%), and the high category with 19 students (20.4%). Although the majority are at the low to moderate level, the presence of around 20% of students experiencing high-level FoMO anxiety remains a warning signal. This finding microscopically reflects the macroscopic mental health urgency in Indonesia, where I-NAMHS (2022) data records a high number of adolescents experiencing mental health problems, with

anxiety disorders as one of the main complaints. FoMO at an alarming level often makes adolescents feel constantly pressured to make online social comparisons so as not to feel ignored by their group (R. Mulyadi et al., 2024).

If examined deeper through cross-tabulation, a very clear relationship pattern is visible: students with high Peer Relationship Quality tend to have low levels of FoMO. Out of 25 students who have high peer relationship quality, the majority (16 students or 64%) only experience FoMO anxiety at a low level. This proves that high-quality friendships in the real world act as a psychological "buffer". Adolescents who feel accepted, valued, and meaningfully connected with their friends at school do not feel a high urgency to validate their existence through social media (Heriandy et al., 2023). Conversely, competitive peer relationship quality or that which emphasizes social exclusivity actually risks increasing FoMO (Oberst et al., 2017).

Conversely, in the group of students with low Peer Relationship Quality (68 students), the percentage of FoMO anxiety moves up, where 28 students (41.2%) are in the moderate category and 17 students (25.0%) are in the high category. This high anxiety rate can be explained through behavioral compensation. When adolescents feel alienated, lonely, or lack support from their peers in the real world, they will shift their focus to the virtual world to monitor other people's activities, which ultimately triggers severe anxiety when seeing others having fun without their presence (Tanhan, 2022).

The phenomenon found in this study is highly relevant to Basic Psychological Needs Theory, particularly in the aspect of relatedness. The desire to be recognized and become part of a group is a natural instinct for adolescents. Failure to build quality peer relationships makes this relatedness need unfulfilled offline. Consequently, adolescents become more sensitive to social rejection and more vulnerable to anxiety when seeing status updates or posts of their friends' activities on social media (Beyens et al., 2021). In addition, individuals who are constantly connected online due to social pressure are also vulnerable to experiencing an increase in FoMO (Baker et al., 2016).

FoMO anxiety conditions triggered by poor peer relationship quality should not be ignored because they can bring systemic impacts on mental health and student academic functioning. Unhandled FoMO anxiety can develop into severe social media addiction, sleep disorders, decreased learning concentration, to triggering depressive symptoms and chronic stress in middle school-aged adolescents (Shannon, 2022). Students who focus too much on worrying about their digital existence tend to lose precious moments to learn and develop interpersonal social skills at school.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study provide strong practical implications for schools, educational counselors, and parents. Reducing the level of FoMO anxiety in students is not enough simply by prohibiting or limiting the use of gadgets, but must be resolved from the root of the problem: improving the quality of their social relationships. Schools need to design social intervention programs, group activities, or peer counseling guidance that can facilitate supportive direct

interaction, so that social challenges in the digital era can be faced by adolescents with a more resilient mental condition (Juliana et al., 2023).

FURTHER STUDY

Future researchers can expand the research model by exploring other variables that potentially serve as moderators or mediators. These variables can include the role of parental attachment or parenting styles, levels of social media addiction, to the advanced impact of FoMO on sleep quality and adolescent depressive symptoms.

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