Journal of Counseling and Humanistic Studies
e-ISSN xxxx-xxxx p-ISSN xxxx-xxxx
Vol 1, No 2 , 2025

Differences in Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) Behavior in Early Adulthood Based on Gender

Karina Eninta Br Ginting[1*], Yohanes Heri Widodo [2]
[1,2] Guidance and Counseling, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
[*]Correspondent writer, *e-mail*: gintingnana2@gmail.com

Abstrak:*Tujuan penelitian ini antara lain mengetahui apakah ada perbedaan perilaku FoMO pada dewasa awal ditinjau berdasarkan jenis kelamin, mengetahui seberapa tinggi perilaku FoMO pada laki-laki dewasa awal dan mengetahui seberapa tinggi perilaku FoMO pada perempuan dewasa awal. Subyek penelitian ini adalah dewasa awal dengan kriteria usia 18-25 tahun. Subjek penelitian sebanyak 152 dewasa awal yang terdiri dari 75 responden laki-laki dan 77 responden perempuan. Penelitian ini menggunakan skala FoMO yang terdiri dari 50 item terpakai dengan 4 aspek yakni 1) kebutuhan sosial, 2) mencari persetujuan 3) emosional, dan 4) sosial media. Skala ini memiliki reabilitas yang baik dengan indeks Alpha Cronbach sebesar 0,929. Pengujian asumsi menghasilkan data yang berdistribusi tidak normal dan bersifat tidak homogen. Karena uji asumsi tidak terpenuhi, digunakan uji beda non parametik Mann Whitney. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah tidak ada perbedaan perilaku FoMO laki-laki dan perempuan (p =0.849), kategori FoMO pada individu dewasa awal laki-laki cenderung sedang(45%) dan Kategori FoMO pada individu dewasa awal perempuan cenderung rendah (45%).*

Kata kunci: Fear of missing out*, dewasa awal, perempuan, laki-laki*

Abstract: The objectives of this study include determining whether there are differences in FoMO behavior in early adulthood based on gender, determining the level of FoMO behavior in early adult males, and determining the level of FoMO behavior in early adult females. The subjects of this study were early adults with age criteria of 18-25 years. The subjects of this study were 152 early adults consisting of 75 male respondents and 77 female respondents. This study used a FoMO scale consisting of 50 items with 4 aspects: 1) social needs, 2) seeking approval, 3) emotional, and 4) social media. This scale has good reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha index of 0.929. Testing the assumptions produced data that were not normally distributed and were not homogeneous. Because the assumption test was not met, the Mann Whitney non-parametric difference test was used. The results of this study were that there was no difference in FoMO behavior between men and women (p = 0.849), the FoMO category in early adult male individuals tended to be moderate (45%) and the FoMO category in early adult female individuals tended to be low (45%).

Keywords: Fear of missing out, early adult, female, male

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has brought about fundamental changes in how individuals interact, communicate, and access information. The emergence of smartphones has significantly facilitated human life by offering features such as photography, video recording, digital reading, and instant communication (Nur & Melati, 2024). In today's interconnected digital era, social media platforms have become the dominant medium for information exchange, content

sharing, and building social relationships Based on recent data from (Ginting et al., 2024) The hootsuite (2024), there are over 5.35 billion active social media users globally. In Indonesia alone, 167 million individuals accounting for 60.4% of the total population actively use social media. Most users are from the generation born between 1997 and 2012 (APJII, 2024) who spend an average of 3 hours and 11 minutes daily on social media. (Ginting et al., 2024).

This high intensity of social media engagement is closely related to the emergence of a psychological phenomenon known as Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). FoMO refers to the fear or anxiety that others are having rewarding experiences from which one is absent (Przybylski et al., 2013). It manifests as a compulsive desire to stay connected with what others are doing, especially through social media (Beyens & eggermont, 2016). Individuals with high FoMO tend to experience emotional discomfort when they perceive themselves as being excluded from social interactions or events. Franchina et al., (2018) identify FoMO as an intrapersonal drive that compels individuals to constantly monitor others' activities, while Tomczyk & Selmanagic-Lizde, (2018) categorize it as a modern form of internet-related behavioral addiction. Several contributing factors to FoMO include low self-esteem, feelings of loneliness, sleep disturbances, and high dependency on social media platforms (Barry & Wong, 2022). These psychological and behavioral components create a cycle that impacts overall well-being and mental health.

Numerous studies have documented the negative impacts of FoMO, such as decreased academic focus, reduced psychological well-being, and disruptions in daily activities Rozgonjuk et al., (2020) Particularly during early adulthood a developmental stage marked by identity exploration, social transition, and lifestyle changes individuals are more susceptible to such influences. According to Santrock, (2019), early adulthood (ages 18–25) is a phase where individuals seek independence, career direction, self-identity, and adapt to social and emotional demands. At this life stage, young adults are especially reliant on digital platforms, viewing social media not only as a tool but also as an integral part of their daily life (Yunarti, 2024)

Although FoMO is widely studied, there is still limited empirical research that focuses specifically on gender-based differences in FoMO behavior, particularly in the context of early adulthood. Some studies suggest females may experience greater emotional reactivity on social platforms, while others propose that males are equally prone to FoMO due to competitiveness and online presence maintenance. These inconsistencies reveal a gap in the literature regarding how gender influences FoMO behavior. Therefore, this study aims to examine differences in FoMO behavior between early adult males and females. It also seeks to describe the level of FoMO experienced by each gender and identify specific high-scoring FoMO items that can inform psychoeducational training topics. Understanding these patterns is essential for developing preventive interventions and promoting healthier digital habits among early adults.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative approach with a comparative research design, aiming to analyze the differences in Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) behavior among early adults based on gender (male and female). The research involved 152 participants within the age range of 18 to 25 years, comprising 75 male and 77 female respondents. The study was conducted at Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta. The sampling technique employed in this study is purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method wherein participants are deliberately selected based on predefined criteria that align with the study objectives. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) individuals aged 18–25 years, (2) active users of social media, and (3) voluntary willingness to participate. This approach allows the researcher to gather data from participants who are most relevant to the research focus, thus enhancing the validity and relevance of the findings.

The use of purposive sampling is deemed appropriate for this study, as it focuses on a specific demographic group early adults who are particularly exposed to and influenced by digital technology and social media engagement. According to Yunarti et al. (2015), purposive sampling is effective in identifying and selecting individuals who possess specific characteristics necessary for understanding a central phenomenon. Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) further emphasize that purposive sampling enables researchers to select participants who are most likely to provide meaningful insights based on their experiences and alignment with the research topic. This method also ensures a balanced representation of both male and female participants, which is crucial given the study's objective of comparing FoMO behavior across genders. By intentionally targeting individuals who meet specific criteria, the study achieves a higher degree of specificity, thereby improving the depth of analysis and interpretability of the results.

Data were collected using a Likert-type FoMO behavior scale, designed to measure four aspects of FoMO: social needs, seeking approval, emotional dependence, and social media usage. Content validity was established through professional judgment by the supervising lecturer to ensure alignment between the items and the theoretical constructs. Empirical validation was conducted through item-total correlation analysis, where items were considered valid if they achieved a correlation coefficient (r) ≥ 0.3 and significance value (ρ) < 0.05. Based on this analysis, 50 items were retained, and 10 items were discarded. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha produced a coefficient value of 0.929.

RESULTS

Assumption testing is conducted prior to hypothesis testing, which consists of normality testing and homogeneity testing. Normality testing aims to examine whether the distribution of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) behavior data follows a normal distribution. Data is said to be

normally distributed if the significance value (p-value) is ≥ 0.05. Based on the analysis results, a p-value of 0.001 was obtained, which is less than 0.05, so the data is not considered to be normally distributed.

Table 1. Results of FoMO Behavior Normality Test

Variable	W	p-value
Fomo behavior	0,967	0,001

Note: Data is said to be normally distributed if the p-value ≥ 0.05

Homogeneity Test

The homogeneity test is used to see whether the variance between groups is the same. The test results show a p-value of 0.953 (> 0.05), which means that the data has a homogeneous variance.

Table 2. Results of FoMO Behavior Homogeneity Test

Variable	F	df 1	df	p-value
Fomo Behavior	0,003	1	150	0,953

Note: Data is considered homogeneous if the p-value is ≥ 0.05.

Mann-Whitney U Test

Since the data was not normally distributed, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test was used to compare FoMO behavior between men and women. The analysis results showed a U value of 3167.50 with Z = -0.191 and p = 0.849, which is greater than 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in FoMO behavior between men and women in early adulthood.

Table 3. Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test for FoMO Behavior

Variable	U	Z	Mean Rank (M)	Mean Rank (F)	p-value
Fomo Behavior	3167,50	-0,191	76,5	76,9	0,849

Note : U is the Mann-Whitney statistical value used to compare the distributions of two groups, Z is the z-score obtained from the conversion of U, Mean Rank (L) and Mean Rank (P) indicate the average FoMO score rankings for men and women, respectively. Since p-value = 0.849 > 0.05, the difference in average FoMO scores is not significant.

Average FoMO Scores by Gender

The average FoMO behavior score for men was 111.92 (SD = 17.23), while for women it was 110.10 (SD = 17.99). Although there was a difference in the average scores, the Mann-Whitney test showed that this difference was not significant.

Table 4. Average FoMO Scores by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE
Male	75	111,92	17,23	1,99
Famale	77	110,10	17,99	2,05

Note: N is the number of respondents, Mean is the average FoMO score, SD is the standard deviation, and SE is the standard error of the mean.

Differences in early adult behavior based on gender

Differences in behavior during early adulthood can be influenced by social roles, communication patterns, and different emotional needs between men and women. Men generally emphasize independence and achievement, while women tend to prioritize emotional closeness and social relationships. These differences can be reflected in Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) behavior, which is the anxiety of missing out on information or social activities, and can manifest differently according to social expectations and digital interaction habits specific to each gender. Therefore, analyzing FoMO differences based on gender is important for understanding behavioral dynamics, social media usage patterns, and emotional well-being during early adulthood.

Table 5. Categorization of FoMO Behavior Subjects in Male Early Adults

Categori	Interval	Freq	%
Very High	163<X	-	-
High	138<X≤ 163	4	5%
Medium	113<X≤163	34	45%
Low	88<X≤113	29	39%
Very Low	X≤88	8	11%
Total		75	100%

Table 5 explains that there are 0 (0%) men who show FoMO behavior in the very high category, there are 4 (5%) men who show FoMO behavior in the high category, there are 34 (45%) men who show FoMO behavior in the medium category, there are 29 (39%) men who show FoMO behavior in the low category, and there are 8 (11%) men who show FoMO behavior in the very low category

Table 6. Categorization of FoMO Behavior Subjects in Female Early Adults

Categori	Interval	Freq	%
Very High	163<X	1	1%
High	138<X≤ 163	2	3%
Medium	113<X≤163	30	35%
Low	88<X≤113	35	45%
Very Low	X≤88	9	12%
Total		77	100%

Table 6 explains that there are several categorizations of subject FoMO behavior in early adult women such as 1 (1%) woman who shows FoMO behavior in the very high category, there are 2 (3%) women who show FoMO behavior in the high category,there are 30 (35%) women who show FoMO behavior in the medium category,there are 35 (45%) women who show FoMO behavior in the low category.

Table 7. Categories of FoMO Behavior Items

Categories	Interval	Freq	%
Very High	494<X	-	-
High	418<X≤494	4	8%
Medium	342<X ≤418	13	26%
Low	266<X≤342	32	64%
Very Low	X≤266	1	2%
Total		50	100%

Table 7 explains that there are several categories of FoMO behavior items there are 0 (0%) FoMO behavior questionnaire items in the very high category, there are 4 (8%) FoMO behavior questionnaire items in the high category, there are 13 (26%) FoMO behavior items in the medium category, there are 32 (64%) FoMO behavior items in the low category, there is 1 (2%) FoMO behavior item in the very low category.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study show no significant difference in the level of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) between young adult men and women. These findings do not support the hypothesis that women have higher FoMO. One of the main factors is the role of holistic education at Sanata Dharma University, which not only develops cognitive aspects but also shapes students' personalities, emotional regulation, and social skills. Education that instills a balance between the academic world and social interaction helps young adult students, both male and female, manage their social media use in a healthier way, thereby reducing the potential for gender differences in FoMO. The uniformity of social media use patterns for academic purposes, relationships, and following campus trends also reinforces this finding.

FoMO in men is characterized by a tendency to build self-image through social media, gain social recognition, and showcase academic, financial, and social achievements. Men are more likely to compare themselves socially with their peers and feel pressured when they are unable to match the achievements of others. This condition triggers the emergence of FoMO, especially when seeing posts showcasing achievements such as scholarships or participation in academic activities (Beyens & Eggermont, 2016). Meanwhile, women tend to have more structured academic activities, focus on long-term goals, and adopt disciplined learning strategies. They also have supportive social networks within the campus environment, resulting in lower needs to seek validation through social media. Emotional support from peers helps women manage social and academic pressures, resulting in a lower risk of FoMO (Dou et al., 2023).

This finding is relevant to Festinger's social comparison theory (in Miller et al., 2015), which explains that individuals tend to evaluate themselves by comparing themselves to others. Social media, which often displays positive and curated content, reinforces the tendency toward FoMO.

However, the results of this study indicate that the social comparison mechanism operates relatively equally across both genders in a homogeneous academic environment. Contextual factors, such as campus culture, holistic education, and post-pandemic digital experiences, also act as moderators that reduce gender differences in FoMO.

This study has several limitations, namely a cross-sectional design that does not allow for causal conclusions, FoMO measurement instruments that may not be sufficiently sensitive to gender differences, and a sample that only comes from one institution with a holistic educational culture, making the results difficult to generalize. Future research is recommended to use a longitudinal design, a mixed-methods approach, and expand the sample to include various institutions with different educational characteristics. Developing a FoMO measurement tool that considers gender-based motivational differences is also important.

Practically, the results of this study suggest that interventions should focus on improving digital literacy, managing social comparison, and strengthening social support, rather than on gender differences. Digital literacy programs can help students understand how social media algorithms work and the impact of content curation on self-perception. Universities can also strengthen peer support groups and counseling services so that students are able to develop adaptive coping strategies to deal with social pressure. Additionally, education on productive social media use can be an effective effort to reduce the risk of FoMO across all genders. In an educational context, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of universities in strengthening digital literacy, managing social comparison, and providing social support. The college curriculum can integrate material related to social media ethics, time management, and self-awareness into self-development programs or counseling services. With a holistic educational approach, students will not only be academically skilled but also have good digital well-being, thereby minimizing the risk of FoMO for all genders.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the alternative hypothesis was not proven because no significant differences were found in FoMO levels between men and women. In general, FoMO levels in men were in the moderate category, while in women they were in the low category. These findings theoretically contribute by showing that FoMO interventions should be designed in a gender-neutral manner, as gender differences are not the primary factor influencing FoMO levels. Additionally, the results of this study enrich the FoMO literature by reinforcing the relevance of Festinger's social comparison theory, where social comparison mechanisms operate similarly in men and women.

From the perspective of educational institutions, both schools and universities, it is recommended to take an active role in reducing FoMO by promoting a balance between digital activities and direct interaction. One effort that can be made is to organize more face-to-face activities, whether in the form of academic programs, collaborative projects, or non-academic activities such as extracurricular activities and character building. Such activities can strengthen social bonds among students and reduce reliance on social, validation through online platforms. Additionally, educational institutions are encouraged to develop psychoeducational programs that include digital literacy, self-control in social media use, and awareness of the impacts of social comparison, to support the overall psychological well-being of young adults.

REFERENCES

Barry, C. T., & Wong, M. Y. (2022). Fear of missing out (FoMO): A generational phenomenon or an individual difference? *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *41*(6), 462–489. https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2022.41.6.462

Beyens, I., & Eggermont, S. (2016). "I don't want to miss a thing": Adolescents' fear of missing out and its relationship to adolescents' social needs, Facebook use, and Facebook related stress. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *64*, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.05.083

Dou, F., Li, Q., Li, X., Li, Q., & Wang, M. (2023). Impact of perceived social support on fear of missing out (FoMO): A moderated mediation model. *Current Psychology*, *42*(1), 63–72. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01404-4

Franchina, V., Vanden Abeele, M., Van Rooij, A. J., Lo Coco, G., & De Marez, L. (2018). Fear of missing out as a predictor of problematic social media use and phubbing behavior among Flemish adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *15*(10), Article 2319. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15102319

Ginting, D. C. A., Rezeki, S. G., Siregar, A. A., & Nurbaiti, N. (2024). Analysis of the influence of social networks on social interaction in the digital era. *Journal of Management Science*, *2*(1), 12–25. https://doi.org/10.cms.pub/jms.2024.2.1.12

Miller, M. K., Clark, J. D., & Jehle, A. (2015). Cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger). In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *The Blackwell encyclopedia of sociology* (1st ed.). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeosc058.pub2

Nur, A., & Melati, M. (2024). The role of smartphones in people's socialization today. *Cohesion: Journal of Science and Technology*, *4*(12), 89–104. https://doi.org/10.3785/kohesi.v4i12.6711

Przybylski, A. K., Murayama, K., DeHaan, C. R., & Gladwell, V. (2013). Motivational, emotional, and behavioral correlates of fear of missing out. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *29*(4), 1841–1848. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.02.014

Rozgonjuk, D., Sindermann, C., Elhai, J. D., & Montag, C. (2020). Fear of missing out (FoMO) and social media's impact on daily-life and productivity at work: Do WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat use disorders mediate that association? *Addictive Behaviors*, *110*, Article 106487. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2020.106487

Santrock, J. W. (2019). *Life span development* (17th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

Tomczyk, Ł., & Selmanagic-Lizde, E. (2018). Fear of missing out (FOMO) among youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina—Scale and selected mechanisms. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *88*, 541–549. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.03.048

Yunarti, D. P. (2024). Analysis of the impact of social media on the FoMO behavior of the millennial generation. *Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, *11*(1), 23–38. https://doi.org/10.15294/jubk.v11i1.2024