

The Relationship *Between Self-Esteem And Fear Of Missing Out (Fomo) In Adolescents Aged 17-18 Years*

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ABSTRACT

Background: Fear of missing out (FoMO) is an anxiety-related condition arising from the perception of missing information, experiences, or social activities of others. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to FoMO due to heightened sensitivity to social comparison and peer acceptance. Self-esteem is a key psychological factor that may influence adolescents' susceptibility to FoMO.

Objective: This study aimed to examine the relationship between self-esteem and fear of missing out (FoMO) among adolescents aged 17–18 years in public senior high schools in Tuban Regency.

Methods: A quantitative, non-experimental study with a correlational cross-sectional design was conducted. The population comprised 1,263 adolescents aged 17–18 years, from which 299 participants were selected using probability sampling with a cluster random sampling technique. Data were collected using self-esteem and FoMO questionnaires and analyzed using the Spearman rank correlation test ($\alpha < 0.05$).

Results: The findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and fear of missing out (FoMO) among adolescents ($p < 0.001$). The correlation analysis indicated a low positive association, suggesting that lower self-esteem was related to higher levels of FoMO.

Conclusion: Self-esteem is significantly associated with fear of missing out (FoMO) among adolescents aged 17–18 years in public senior high schools in Tuban Regency. Strengthening self-esteem may help reduce vulnerability to FoMO and promote healthier psychological adjustment in the context of increasing social media use.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Teenager, Adolescents

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence represents a critical developmental stage characterized by the exploration of self-identity, heightened curiosity, and a gradual transition toward adulthood (Sica and Sestito, 2021). During this period, adolescents often experience psychological confusion as they attempt to determine activities that are meaningful and beneficial to their personal growth, while simultaneously being drawn to new and unfamiliar experiences (Russo-Netzer and Shoshani, 2020). In the context of rapid digital advancement, social media has become an integral part of adolescents' daily lives, serving as a primary platform for information exchange, social interaction, and self-expression (Maza & Amalia Aprianty, 2022; Butler, 2024)

Globally, the increasing intensity of social media use among adolescents has been associated with various psychological consequences (Boer *et al.*, 2020). Prolonged engagement with social media enables adolescents to continuously monitor the activities and experiences of others (Pouwels *et al.*, 2021; Haddock *et al.*, 2022). When adolescents are unable to remain connected online, they may perceive that the world is moving rapidly without them, leading to feelings of being left behind (Odgers and Jensen, 2020). This condition fosters persistent curiosity and anxiety, which, when poorly regulated, may develop into a psychological phenomenon known as *fear of missing out* (FoMO) (Siddik *et al.*, 2020; Eitan, T & Noor, 2025)

Fear of missing out (FoMO) is defined as a psychological state in which individuals experience

anxiety and discomfort due to the perception that they are unaware of experiences, events, or information occurring elsewhere (Zhang et al, 2020). This condition often manifests as excessive concern about missing social activities, persistent urges to monitor online updates, and heightened anxiety when access to the internet or social media is restricted (Henzel and Håkansson, 2021; Humaira, 2022). FoMO has increasingly been recognized as a global mental health concern, particularly among adolescents who are highly engaged with digital platforms.

Empirical evidence from international studies supports the high prevalence of FoMO among adolescents. Research conducted in Poland involving internet users aged 15–65 years revealed that the highest prevalence of FoMO occurred in the 15–19-year age group, with 28% categorized as having high levels of FoMO, followed by individuals aged 25–34 years at 22% (Milatina et al., 2021). Similarly, a study by Andriana (2024) involving 228 respondents aged 17 years and above reported that 49.1% of participants experienced high levels of FoMO, while 50.9% were categorized as having low FoMO.

In the Indonesian context, FoMO has also emerged as a significant psychological phenomenon among adolescents. A study conducted in East Java involving respondents aged 12–25 years demonstrated that all participants experienced FoMO at varying levels. The findings showed that 60% of respondents experienced FoMO in the mild category, 36% in the moderate category, and 4% in the high category (Goddess, 2022). These findings indicate that FoMO is not only prevalent globally but is also a growing concern among Indonesian adolescents.

Several factors have been identified as contributors to the development of FoMO, including unmet psychological needs, insufficient social connectedness, age, and gender (Humaira, 2022). Another significant factor influencing FoMO is self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of self-worth, encompassing both positive and negative attitudes toward oneself (Fahmi et al., 2022). Adolescents with low self-esteem tend to experience feelings of loneliness and social isolation, leading them to rely more heavily on social media as a means of passive communication and validation. Social media is perceived as an efficient tool for maintaining social connections and accessing the latest information, thereby reinforcing FoMO-related behaviors (Amalia et al., 2022).

The impact of FoMO on adolescents can be substantial, affecting both psychological well-being and daily functioning. Individuals experiencing FoMO often demonstrate excessive social media use, which may result in disrupted sleep patterns, irregular eating habits, reduced engagement in real-life social interactions, and diminished self-satisfaction. Moreover, FoMO can trigger feelings of jealousy and social comparison, as adolescents perceive others'

online portrayals as more enjoyable and fulfilling than their own lived experiences (Kusumaisna & Satwika, 2022).

Given these negative consequences, effective efforts to mitigate FoMO are urgently required. One protective factor that plays a crucial role in reducing FoMO is self-esteem. Adolescents with high self-esteem tend to exhibit optimism, self-confidence, resilience, and the ability to establish healthy interpersonal relationships. They possess a positive self-concept, enabling them to adapt effectively to challenges and to evaluate themselves independently of external validation (Send, 2022). In addition, strategies such as limiting gadget and social media use through *social media detox* have been proposed as practical interventions. Social media detox involves consciously reducing and selecting social media usage to prevent addictive behaviors and anxiety associated with constant online connectivity.

At the local level, preliminary observations and interviews conducted by the researcher among adolescents aged 17–18 years at a senior high school in Tuban Regency revealed frequent mobile phone use, primarily for checking social media notifications such as WhatsApp, TikTok, and Instagram. Adolescents reported using these platforms to ensure they did not miss information, trends, or activities popular among their peers. These behavioral patterns indicate the presence of FoMO symptoms among adolescents in the study setting.

Based on the global, national, and local evidence presented above, FoMO among adolescents emerges as a significant psychological issue closely related to self-esteem. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between self-esteem and fear of missing out (FoMO) among adolescents aged 17–18 years at a senior high school in Tuban Regency.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational analytical design using a cross-sectional method. The study was conducted in October 2024 at five public senior high schools in Tuban Regency, namely Public Senior High School 1 Tuban, Public Senior High School 2 Tuban, Public Senior High School 3 Tuban, Public Senior High School 4 Tuban, and Public Senior High School 5 Tuban. The study variables consisted of self-esteem as the independent variable and fear of missing out (FoMO) as the dependent variable. The study population included all adolescents aged 17–18 years enrolled in public senior high schools in Tuban Regency, totaling 1,263 students. A sample of 304 adolescents was selected using probability sampling with a cluster random sampling technique, based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires. Self-esteem was measured using a self-esteem questionnaire based on a Likert scale,

while fear of missing out (FoMO) was assessed using a FoMO questionnaire, also using a Likert scale. Data analysis was performed using the Spearman rank correlation test using SPSS software version 22 for Windows, with a significance level set at $\alpha < 0.05$.

This study received ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Nahdlatul Ulama Tuban Institute of Health Sciences, as evidenced by Ethical Clearance No. 257/LEPK/IJKNU/X/2024.

RESULTS

The characteristic data of the respondents in this study are as follows:

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondent Characteristics (n= 299)

Characteristics of Respondents	F	%
Gender		
Man	94	31.4 %
Woman	205	68.6 %
Age		
17 years	142	47.5 %
18 years old	157	52.5 %
School Origin		
Public Senior High School 1 Tuban	80	26.2%
Public Senior High School 2 Tuban	68	22.7%
Public Senior High School 3 Tuban	54	18.1%
Public Senior High School 4 Tuban	49	16.4%
Public Senior High School 5 Tuban	48	16.1%

Based on Table 1, among the 299 respondents, the majority were 18 years old, accounting for 157 participants (52.5%). Regarding gender distribution, most respondents were female, totaling 205 individuals (68.6%). In terms of school distribution, nearly one-quarter of the respondents were from

Public Senior High School 1 Tuban, with 80 students (26.8%). The reduction in the number of respondents from Public Senior High School 1 Tuban, from the initially targeted 85 to 80 participants, occurred due to incomplete questionnaire responses within the predetermined data collection period.

Table 2. Distribution of Self-Esteem and Fear of Missing Out Frequencies (n = 299)

Variable	F	%
<i>Self-Esteem</i>		
Low	55	18.4%
Moderate	219	73.2%
High	25	8.4%
<i>Fear of Missing Out</i>		
High	121	40.5%
Moderate	148	49.5%
Low	30	10.0%

Based on Table 2, among the 299 respondents, the majority demonstrated moderate levels of self-esteem, accounting for 219 participants (73.2%). Furthermore, nearly half of the respondents

experienced a moderate level of fear of missing out (FoMO), with 148 participants (49.5%).

Table 3. Cross-Table of the Relationship between Self-Esteem and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in Adolescents Aged 17-18 Years in Tuban Regency High School (n = 299)

Variabel	Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)			T	Value	Correlation Coefficients
	High	Moderate	Low			
<i>Self-Esteem</i>						
Low	37 (67.3%)	17 (30.9%)	1 (5.5%)	55 (100.0%)	0.000	0.345
Moderate	81 (37.0%)	120 (54.8%)	18 (8.2%)	219 (100.0%)		
High	3 (12.0%)	11 (44.0%)	11 (44.0%)	25 (100.0%)		

Variabel	Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)			T	Value	Correlation Coefficients
	High	Moderate	Low			
Total	121 (100.0%)	148 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	299 (100.0%)		

Based on Table 3, the majority of respondents with moderate self-esteem experienced moderate levels of fear of missing out (FoMO), accounting for 120 participants (54.8%). In contrast, most respondents with low self-esteem exhibited high levels of fear of missing out (FoMO), with 37 participants (67.3%). Statistical analysis revealed a significant relationship between self-esteem and fear of missing out (FoMO) among adolescents aged 17–18 years in public senior high schools in Tuban Regency ($p < 0.001$), with a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.345, indicating a low positive correlation.

DISCUSSION

This study indicates that self-esteem is significantly associated with fear of missing out (FoMO) among adolescents aged 17–18 years in public senior high schools in Tuban Regency. Conceptually, this finding supports the view that FoMO is not merely a consequence of social media exposure, but also reflects adolescents' underlying psychological resources particularly their evaluation of self-worth and their need for social validation (Humaira, 2022; Fahmi et al., 2022).

During adolescence, sensitivity to peer evaluation and the desire for belonging are typically heightened. In this developmental context, social media functions as an arena where adolescents observe peers' activities, achievements, and social inclusion in real time (Maza & Amalia Aprianty, 2022). When self-esteem is relatively low, adolescents may be more prone to interpret peers' posts through an "upward comparison" lens, which increases insecurity and reinforces the perceived urgency to remain connected, updated, and socially visible (Amalia et al., 2022). This pattern is consistent with contemporary evidence showing that FoMO can operate through social comparison processes and self-esteem dynamics, shaping problematic engagement with social media (Servidio et al., 2024).

Adolescents with moderate self-esteem may still experience FoMO because external validation remains influential in adolescence. However, FoMO in this group tends to be more situational driven by curiosity, peer norms, and trend-following rather than persistent anxiety. This interpretation aligns with prior findings suggesting that FoMO varies in intensity across adolescents and may not always reflect severe psychological distress, especially when self-regulation and self-acceptance remain relatively intact (Farida, 2021; Humaira, 2022).

Meanwhile, adolescents with higher self-esteem are generally more able to maintain internal validation and psychological stability, which may buffer them from excessive FoMO. They may still want to stay connected socially, but they tend to be more selective and less distressed when not continuously online (Send, 2022). In other words, stronger self-esteem can function as a protective factor that reduces dependence on external approval and limits maladaptive social comparison (Fahmi et al., 2022; Amalia et al., 2022). This mechanism is also supported by broader evidence linking FoMO to patterns of problematic or addictive social media use where the "problematic" element relates less to duration and more to compulsivity and negative emotions accompanying use (Kılınçel et al, 2025).

From an applied perspective, these findings imply that interventions to reduce FoMO in adolescents should not focus solely on restricting screen time, but also on strengthening self-esteem and adaptive coping skills. Approaches such as guidance and counseling programs, self-esteem enhancement activities, and psychoeducation about healthy social media engagement may help adolescents reduce maladaptive comparison and reliance on external validation (Kusumaisna & Satwika, 2022; Send, 2022). In addition, the emerging literature suggests that structured reductions in social media engagement (e.g., short-term "digital detox") may provide measurable mental health benefits in young populations, although long-term effects and optimal formats require further study (Calvert et al., 2025).

Implications

The findings of this study suggest that strengthening adolescents' self-esteem may play an important role in reducing fear of missing out (FoMO). School-based counseling and health promotion programs should focus on enhancing self-worth, emotional regulation, and healthy social media use rather than solely limiting screen time. From a health and nursing perspective, early identification of FoMO and self-esteem issues may support preventive mental health interventions among adolescents in the digital era.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation of the relationship between self-esteem and FoMO. In addition, data were collected using self-reported

questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias. The study was conducted in public senior high schools within a single region, which may limit generalizability. Future research is recommended to employ longitudinal or mixed-method designs and include broader populations and additional psychological variables related to FoMO.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the majority of adolescents aged 17–18 years in public senior high schools in Tuban Regency demonstrate moderate levels of self-esteem and moderate levels of fear of missing out (FoMO). These findings indicate that while adolescents generally possess an adequate sense of self-worth, they remain susceptible to FoMO as part of the developmental and social dynamics characteristic of adolescence. Furthermore, the results confirm a significant relationship between self-esteem and fear of missing out (FoMO) among adolescents. Lower levels of self-esteem are associated with higher vulnerability to FoMO, whereas higher self-esteem appears to function as a protective psychological factor that reduces excessive concern about missing social experiences. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening adolescents' self-esteem as a potential strategy to mitigate fear of missing out and promote healthier psychological adjustment in the context of increasing social media engagement.

Declaration of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between the researcher and related parties.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors collaborate with each other in a series of research, article writing and also the improvement process.

Data Availability

All data utilized in this study, including raw data, analyzed datasets, and supporting documents, are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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