

FOMO, Social Media, and the Surge in Suicide Cases: A Student Mental Health Perspective in the Digital Age

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Abstract: In the digital era, the use of social media among students in Indonesia continues to increase, giving rise to the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). According to data from We Are Social and Hootsuite (2023), 34% of social media users in Indonesia come from the 18-24 age group, making students the most vulnerable group to the negative impact of social media. FOMO, a condition where a person feels afraid of falling behind on information or activities that others are doing, often triggers anxiety and stress. This contributes to a decline in mental health, which in some cases leads to an increase in suicidal thoughts. A report from the Ministry of Health (2021) states that one in four university students in Indonesia experience mental health disorders, with intensive social media use as one of the triggering factors. This research uses a literature study method, by reviewing various scientific literature, government reports, and recent statistical data related to the relationship between FOMO, social media, and college students' mental health. Data were collected from academic journals, health surveys, and campus suicide reports. The study results show that FOMO triggered by social media use has a significant impact on college students' mental health. The pressure to always be "connected" and follow trends leads to chronic anxiety, depression, and in some cases, suicidal tendencies. The surge in suicides among college students shows the need for serious attention to this phenomenon. In conclusion, FOMO and the overuse of social media contribute greatly to the mental health crisis among college students. A preventive approach through digital literacy education and mental health support on campus is needed to address this issue.

Keywords: FOMO, Social media, Student mental health, Suicide.

Introduction

The digital era has brought significant changes to individuals, especially the younger generation in interacting and building their social identity. Students, as part of an age group that is exposed to technology, often use social media as the main means to communicate, get information, and build social networks (Datareportal, 2023). In this context, social media is not only a means of communication, but also shapes students' self-image through the various content they consume or share. However, behind this positive development comes the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), which can have a negative impact on their mental health. FOMO, or the fear of missing out on important experiences or information, often triggers anxiety and feelings of

alienation, as they feel left out of the social activities of their friends on social media (Taswiyah, 2022).

Research shows that FOMO is closely related to increased levels of stress, anxiety and even depression among university students (Fatimah, 2023). In addition, the constant exposure to the idealized life presented on social media often causes students to feel that their lives are less meaningful or not as good as others. This situation is exacerbated by the pressure to meet high social and academic expectations, thus exacerbating students' mental health conditions. In Indonesia, data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health shows that mental health disorders among adolescents, including university students, continue to increase along with their increasing attachment to social

media (Elis, 2023). This makes it urgent for research to understand how FOMO and social media use can directly affect students' mental health, and whether this phenomenon is related to the increase in suicides on campus.

This study aims to analyze the impact of FOMO and social media on students' mental health, as well as understand their relationship with suicide risk among university students in Indonesia. Through this analysis, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of the factors that trigger mental distress in university students can be obtained as well as preventive measures that can be taken to reduce the negative impact of social media use.

This research offers novelty in two main aspects. First, it highlights the link between FOMO, social media, and suicide risk, which has rarely been comprehensively studied in the context of Indonesian university students. Second, this study focuses on how social media influences the identity development process and mental health of university students, which is expected to provide guidance for higher education institutions in designing mental health programs that are suitable for the challenges of the digital era. The novelty aspect is expected to provide new insights for the campus and parents in understanding the role of social media in students' mental health.

So far, various studies have identified the relationship between social media and mental health, but there are still some research gaps that need to be explored further. First, while there are studies on the effects of FOMO on mental health, there are limited in-depth studies on how FOMO specifically affects Indonesian university students and increases suicide risk. Second, most studies have focused on the relationship between social media and anxiety or depression in general, but there has not been much in-depth examination of the specific factors that play a role in increasing suicidal ideation due to social media pressure. Third, studies involving university students as a special population in Indonesia have not integrated analysis of the social and cultural environment that influences how students respond to social pressure on social media.

By addressing these research gaps, this study is expected to provide comprehensive insights into

the influence of social media and FOMO on college students' mental health, as well as provide practical recommendations for campuses and families in dealing with this challenge. This study is expected to fill a gap in the mental health literature and provide relevant scientific evidence in formulating mental health policies on campus, particularly with regard to the impact of social media on university students.

Materials and Methods

This research uses a literature review method that aims to analyze the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and social media on students' mental health, as well as its relation to the increase in suicides among students. The literature study was chosen as a research method because it allows researchers to conduct an in-depth study of relevant literature sources and analyze secondary data related to phenomena that are being faced by students in the context of the digital era.

The research materials in this study include literature relevant to the topics of FOMO, social media, and student mental health, including journal articles, books, reports from official institutions, and statistical data related to the prevalence of suicides among Indonesian students. Some of the criteria used in selecting the literature included: First, publications from national and international reputable journals that address FOMO, social media, and mental health among adolescents and university students. Second, official reports from government agencies, such as the Indonesian Ministry of Health and the National Commission on Child Protection, as well as private organizations related to social media use in Indonesia. Third, articles published within the last 5 years, with a special focus on the development of social media and its impact on mental health in university students. This selection of sources was done to ensure that the information used was relevant to the Indonesian context and reflected current conditions related to FOMO and mental health issues.

This research procedure was conducted in several stages as follows: First, Secondary Data

Collection: We collected literature from academic databases such as ScienceDirect, PubMed, and Google Scholar, as well as publicly available reports from official institutions. Keywords such as “FOMO,” “social media,” “mental health,” “university students,” and “suicide” were used to find relevant literature. Second, Literature Selection and Screening: Once the literature was collected, screening was done by looking at the relevance of the articles based on the title, abstract, and keywords. Literature that did not fit the selection criteria or was too general was excluded from the analysis. Third, Classification and Categorization: The screened literature was then classified based on the main topics, namely (1) FOMO and its effect on mental health, (2) social media use among university students, and (3) the relationship between FOMO, social media, and suicidal tendencies. This process facilitated the analysis and comparison of results from the various literatures used. Fourth, Qualitative Analysis: The collected data were analyzed qualitatively by synthesizing the results of various previous studies. This analysis focuses on understanding the pattern of the relationship between FOMO, social media, and student mental health.

Data analysis in this literature study research was conducted using a thematic analysis approach. The analysis process involved the following steps: First, the main themes were identified: The main themes identified included (1) factors influencing FOMO in college students, (2) the impact of social media use on college students' mental health, and (3) the relationship between FOMO and suicidal tendencies among college students. Second, Data Synthesis: The researcher synthesized the data based on the results of the studies that had been classified, emphasizing the similarities and

differences in findings from various literatures. This synthesis was done to build a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media on college students' mental health. Third, Data Interpretation: The data obtained from various literatures were interpreted to understand the extent to which FOMO affects the psychological well-being of college students as well as the factors driving the surge in suicides in the campus environment.

This study used literature as the source of data, so validity depends on the quality and relevance of the available sources. To minimize bias, only literature from trusted sources was used, and multiple perspectives from diverse literature were included in the analysis. The limitations of this study are the limited access to direct empirical data and the absence of direct participation of students as research subjects.

Results and Discussion

The results of this literature study show that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and social media use play a major role in affecting the mental health of university students in Indonesia. Social pressure and expectations to always be engaged or “seen” to be active on social media create a challenging psychological situation. Feelings of anxiety, social isolation, and even depression are often the consequences of over-attachment to social media and the FOMO phenomenon, which in turn increases the risk of self-destructive behavior and suicide. The following is an in-depth analysis of the causal effects of FOMO and social media on college students' mental health, and the reasons why these impacts occur.

1. Attachment to Social Media and Increased FOMO

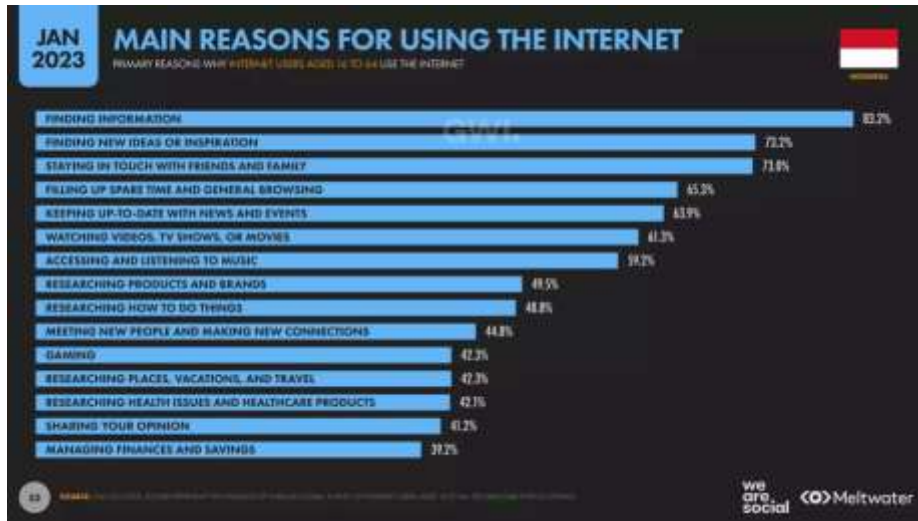


Figure 1. Main Reasons for Internet Access in Indonesia

Social media today serves not only as a platform to communicate, but also as a tool for students to build self-identity and seek social validation. In this environment, FOMO develops as a response to constant exposure to the idealized life content that others display. Research from We Are Social (2023) shows that more than 30% of college students in

Indonesia spend more than three hours per day on social media, which increases the risk of exposure to FOMO. Students who feel that they are falling behind or cannot keep up with the standard of living that social media “demands” are likely to feel anxious and dissatisfied with their own lives.

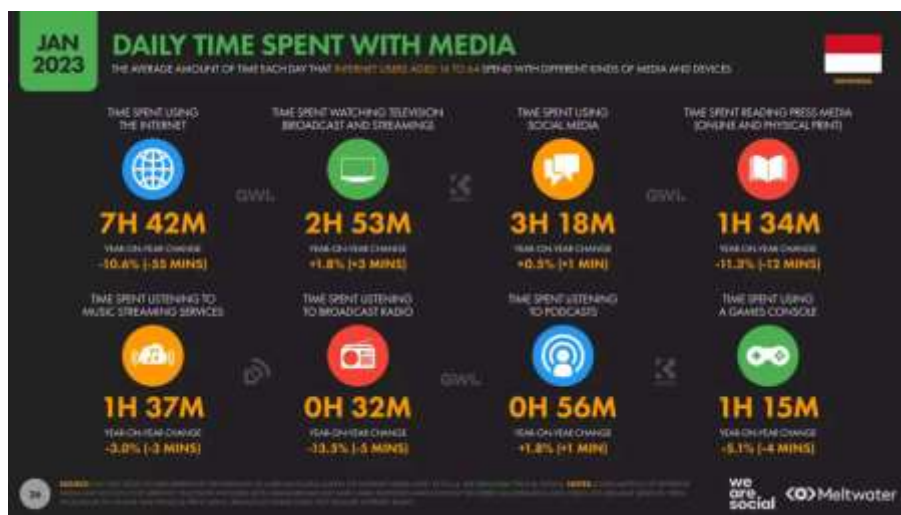


Figure 2. Time Spent Accessing Digital Media in Indonesia

When individuals feel alienated or left behind, the resulting psychological response is often emotional tension and low self-esteem. This further increases the risk of mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. Studies suggest that

students who persistently experience FOMO also show symptoms of social isolation, where they feel unable to interact in social situations outside of social media.

2. Social Media as a Trigger for Stress and Depression

FOMO and social media mutually reinforce their impact on stress and depression in college students. The existence of content that only shows the positive side of one's life triggers students to compare themselves with unrealistic standards of life. From a psychological perspective, this process of social comparison results in a negative self-concept that worsens the mental state. In some cases, the feeling of inability to keep up with such high social standards creates great pressure and eventually triggers depression.

This phenomenon is also related to the dopamine release mechanism, where every time someone gets likes or attention on social media, the brain produces dopamine which creates a momentary feeling of pleasure. Students who often seek validation through interactions on social media will be trapped in a cycle of seeking temporary happiness, but feel empty after the effect subsides. This condition worsens when students feel underappreciated or do not get the expected interactions, thus reinforcing feelings of anxiety and depression that ultimately impact their quality of life.



Figure 3. List of Frequently Visited Websites in Indonesia

3. Spike in Suicide Cases in Campus Environment



Figure 4.. Forms of violence and the amount of violence experienced by victims.

The FOMO phenomenon and social media pressure have contributed to the increase in suicides among university students. This condition is created when students feel they fail to meet the social expectations displayed on social media or experience hopelessness in meeting the standard of living they see. The National Commission on Child

Protection (2022) reports that more than 25% of suicides among Indonesian students are related to social pressures, including those generated by social media. When students are severely depressed and feel there is no way out of the pressure, suicidal ideation is often considered a last resort.

Table 1. Social Media Users in Indonesia by Age and Gender

Nama Data	Laki-Laki	Perempuan
13-17 tahun	6,2	7,1
18-24 tahun	16,1	14,2
25-34 tahun	20,6	14,8
35-44 tahun	7,1	5,4
45-54 tahun	2,8	2,1
55-64 tahun	0,8	0,6

The results of this study indicate that suicides often occur in students who have excessive attachment to social media. Those who are trapped in feelings of isolation and inability to meet social expectations tend to feel greater mental distress. In the college environment, where students also face high academic demands, feelings of anxiety and

depression from social media can increase the risk of hopelessness. This creates a causal effect where social media dependence and FOMO pressure contribute to the loss of positive emotional support, ultimately exacerbating suicidal behavioral tendencies.

4. Why this effect exists and relevance for future research

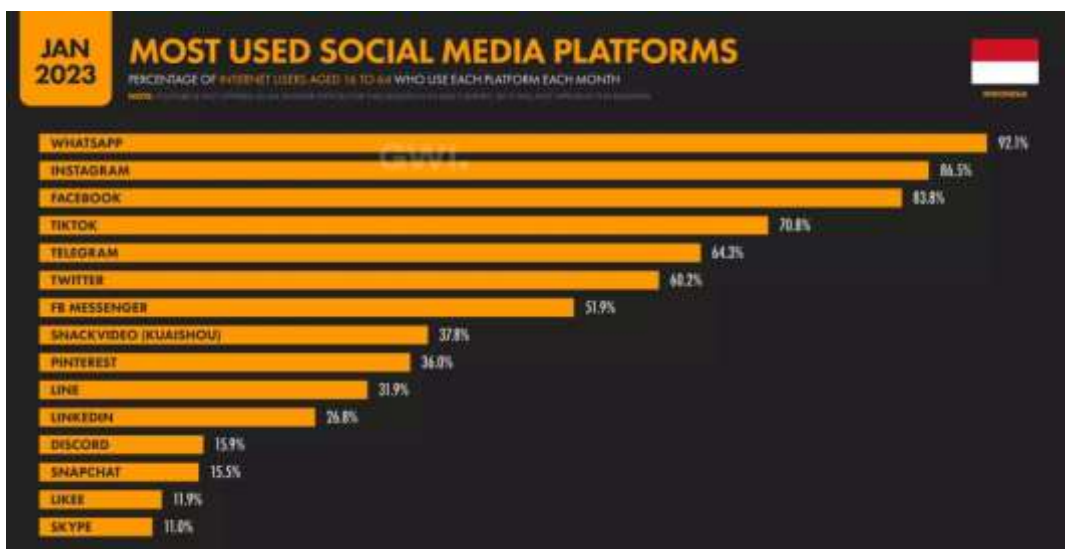


Figure 5. Social Media Platforms Frequently Used by Indonesians

The impact of FOMO and social media on college students' mental health arises mainly because social media creates a "social reality" that is curatorial and not entirely accurate. College students tend to compare themselves to unrealistic idealized standards, and this worsens the perception of their own lives. As a result, students not only feel anxiety and life dissatisfaction, but also have a higher risk of experiencing severe mental conditions. It is important that higher education institutions, families, and student communities pay attention to these conditions, in order to develop strategies that prevent the adverse effects of social media and provide effective psychological support for students. Therefore, to mitigate the negative impacts of social media, campuses and related parties need to take preventive measures, including providing easily accessible mental health services, educating students about healthy social media use, and building a social environment that supports students' psychological well-being.

Conclusion

This study shows that the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and social media use have a significant impact on the mental health of university students in Indonesia. Excessive attachment to social media reinforces feelings of anxiety, social isolation, and pressure to achieve idealized standards of living that are often unrealistic. Findings suggest that exposure to "idealized" social lives on social media exacerbates feelings of life dissatisfaction, ultimately increasing the risk of depression and suicide among university students.

FOMO triggers intense emotional responses, including anxiety and low self-esteem, as college students often feel unable to fulfill the social expectations they see on social media. These factors suggest a causal relationship between dependence on social media and the mental vulnerability of college students, especially in the face of heightened social pressures in the digital age.

This research underscores the important role of the campus, family and community in creating a

supportive social environment and providing accessible and effective mental health services. Interventions that focus on digital literacy, healthy social media use, and emotional support for students are important steps in reducing the negative impact of social media on their mental health. The findings of this study are expected to make a significant contribution in formulating mental health policies that are more responsive and appropriate to the challenges of the digital era.

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