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Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) as a Psychological Challenge in Students' Learning Process at MTs Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) as a psychological challenge in the learning process of students at MTs Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang. The rapid development of digital technology and the intensive use of social media among adolescents have increased the tendency to remain continuously connected to online information and social activities. This condition may influence students' learning concentration, academic engagement, and self-regulation. This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The participants were eighth-grade students of MTs Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings reveal that FoMO is experienced by students due to the high intensity of social media use in their daily lives. FoMO is reflected in frequent smartphone checking, difficulty diverting attention from social media notifications, and anxiety when missing social information. These conditions affect the learning process by reducing concentration, academic engagement, and self-regulation. In the context of madrasah education, FoMO represents not only a psychological challenge but also a pedagogical issue related to character development and self-control grounded in Islamic values. Strengthening digital literacy, self-regulation, and collaboration among teachers, parents, and schools is therefore essential to promote balanced and healthy social media use.

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Introduction

The development of digital technology over the past two decades has significantly transformed patterns of social interaction, learning methods, and the psychological behavior of students (Nasrullah, 2015). Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and other digital platforms are no longer merely communication tools but have evolved into primary spaces where adolescents build self-identity, seek social recognition, and keep up with rapidly changing information. This transformation strengthens social connectivity while also introducing new psychological challenges in students' lives in the digital era (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016).

In the context of adolescent development, students at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) level are in a phase of identity exploration characterized by an increasing need for social

acceptance and involvement in peer groups. During this stage, adolescents tend to be more sensitive to social evaluation and have a strong desire to maintain their existence within their social environment (Arnett, 2015). Social media becomes a space that facilitates these needs through fast and continuous virtual interaction, encouraging students to constantly monitor digital social activities to avoid feeling left behind in their peer circles.

From the perspective of educational psychology, changes in the digital environment influence students' self-regulated learning, namely their ability to manage attention, motivation, and learning behavior independently (Zimmerman, 2002). When self-regulation weakens due to digital distractions, students tend to struggle to maintain learning focus and academic engagement. John W. Santrock (2018) explains that learning environments filled with external distractions can hinder students' ability to concentrate and effectively manage their learning processes. When social media becomes a more stimulating source of attention than classroom learning activities, students may experience reduced focus, motivation, and academic engagement.

One psychological phenomenon emerging in this context is Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). FoMO was first introduced by Andrew K. Przybylski, Kou Murayama, DeHaan, and Gladwell (2013) as *"a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent,"* referring to excessive anxiety that others are experiencing valuable events without one's involvement. This phenomenon has been shown to be closely related to the intensity of social media use and lower levels of psychological well-being (Przybylski et al., 2013). FoMO is also linked to the fundamental human need for social connectedness and self-recognition within rapidly evolving digital environments (Reagle, 2015).

Research indicates that FoMO is significantly associated with social media addiction, concentration difficulties, and declining mental health. Daria J. Kuss and Mark D. Griffiths (2017) emphasize that excessive social media use can trigger psychological dependence affecting cognitive, emotional, and social aspects, particularly among adolescents in the identity-development stage. This finding is reinforced by Oberst et al. (2017), who found that FoMO acts as a mediator in the emergence of psychological problems related to intensive social media use. Research by Alt (2015) also demonstrates that FoMO is associated with academic motivation and individuals' attachment to digital media. Individuals with high FoMO levels tend to have a stronger need to remain constantly connected online, which may interfere with academic attention.

In educational settings, FoMO represents a serious psychological challenge. Students experiencing digital social anxiety often struggle to maintain focus during the learning process. They are frequently compelled to check their devices, fear missing information, and show decreased active engagement in classroom activities. These conditions directly impact learning concentration, social interaction, and academic motivation (Sari, 2019). Additionally, digital technology creates an "alone together" condition, where individuals remain virtually connected while experiencing isolation in real-life interactions. In educational environments, this condition may affect the quality of students' social relationships in the classroom because attention is more focused on digital communication than direct interaction (Turkle, 2011).

Online communication among adolescents has two dimensions: it provides opportunities to expand social relationships while simultaneously increasing dependence on digital social validation. Such dependence may trigger anxiety when individuals cannot continuously access social information. Therefore, social media use requires self-regulation skills to prevent disruptions to students' psychological and academic development (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011).

At the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) level, particularly at MTs Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang, students are in early adolescence, a stage characterized by high psychological vulnerability to digital social influences. At this stage, the need for social recognition is particularly strong, making social media one of the main means of fulfilling this need.

Consequently, the potential emergence of FoMO becomes greater if not balanced by adequate self-control and digital literacy (Nasrullah, 2015).

Previous studies have shown that FoMO is closely linked to social media use and mental health (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017), as well as contributing to social anxiety among adolescents (Rahmawati, 2020). Other studies have identified the influence of social media on students' learning motivation and concentration (Fitriani, 2021; Sari, 2019). However, these studies remain general and have not specifically connected FoMO with learning processes in madrasah environments. Furthermore, empirical studies integrating FoMO with Islamic educational values remain limited. Yet madrasahs possess educational characteristics that emphasize not only cognitive development but also character formation, spirituality, and self-control through religious values.

Moreover, limited research has specifically examined the impact of FoMO on learning processes at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) level. Considering that early adolescents have high psychological vulnerability to digital social influences, FoMO may exert complex effects on learning concentration, social interaction, and academic motivation in classrooms. Thus, a clear research gap exists: the lack of comprehensive studies integrating FoMO with learning processes in Islamic value-based madrasahs, particularly at the MTs level, from psychological, pedagogical, and religious perspectives.

Based on this research gap, the novelty of this study lies in analyzing Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) within the context of Madrasah Tsanawiyah students grounded in Islamic values. This study integrates FoMO with classroom learning processes so that it is understood not merely as a social media phenomenon but also as a factor directly influencing students' learning dynamics. The objectives of this study are to describe the intensity of social media use among students at MTs Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang, identify the forms of FoMO experienced by students, and analyze the impact of FoMO on the learning process, particularly regarding learning concentration, academic engagement, and self-regulation. Additionally, this study applies an Islamic educational psychology approach by linking FoMO with self-regulation and character formation in the digital era, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between digital behavior, learning processes, psychological and pedagogical aspects, and religious values in madrasah education.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) as a psychological challenge in the learning process of students at MTs Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang. A qualitative approach was selected because the research focuses on the meanings, experiences, and socio-psychological conditions of students in the context of social media use within educational settings (Moleong, 2017). The case study design was applied to obtain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon within a specific context (Yin, 2018).

The participants of this study were eighth-grade students at MTs Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang selected through purposive sampling, in which informants were chosen based on criteria relevant to the research focus (Sugiyono, 2019). Participants were selected according to specific characteristics, particularly students who actively use social media and demonstrate tendencies associated with FoMO in their daily activities.

Data collection techniques included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Observation was conducted to directly examine students' classroom behavior, particularly related to learning concentration, device usage, and social interaction. In-depth interviews were carried out with students and teachers to explore experiences, perceptions, and the impact of FoMO on the learning process. Documentation was used to support the data through learning records, school policies, and

students' digital activities relevant to the study (Moleong, 2017).

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Data reduction involved selecting information relevant to the focus of FoMO in learning contexts. Data presentation was organized in the form of systematic descriptive narratives, while conclusions were drawn gradually based on emerging patterns from field data.

Data validity was tested using source triangulation and technique triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from students, teachers, and observations, while technique triangulation involved comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure data consistency. Through this method, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of FoMO as a psychological challenge in the learning process and its influence on students' self-regulation and character development in the digital era, particularly within the context of madrasah education.

Results and Discussion

1. Intensity of Social Media Use Among Students at MTs Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang

The findings indicate that social media use has become an inseparable part of the daily lives of eighth-grade students at MTs Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang. Based on observations and interviews, students actively use various digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube for communication, entertainment, information seeking, and social interaction with peers. Most participants reported accessing social media almost every day with high frequency, including before classes began, during breaks, and after school activities. Some students even showed a tendency to monitor notifications during lessons. These habits demonstrate that social media functions not only as a communication tool but also as a virtual social space with a strong influence on adolescents' psychological lives.

These findings reveal that students exist within an intensive digital environment where social connectedness becomes a primary need. During early adolescence, the need for peer acceptance plays a significant role in identity formation. Consequently, social media serves as an important means of maintaining social existence and obtaining validation from peer groups (Boyd, 2014; Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016).

Furthermore, the high intensity of social media use indicates that students have made gadgets an inseparable part of their daily routines. Social media is not only used for communication purposes but also serves as a primary source of entertainment and information. This condition aligns with the view that the development of digital technology has transformed adolescents' patterns of social interaction from direct communication into faster and more instant network-based digital communication (Nasrullah, 2015). As a result, the boundary between learning space and entertainment space becomes increasingly blurred, thereby increasing the potential for distractions that affect students' learning focus.

Moreover, the habit of being constantly connected to social media also reflects a dependency on digital stimuli. Students tend to feel the need to continuously check updates in order not to miss out on social developments within their peer environment. In the context of adolescent psychological development, this condition is closely related to the strong need for social recognition and acceptance within peer groups during this developmental stage (Sarwono, 2016). Therefore, the high intensity of social media use does not only affect behavioral aspects but also shapes new psychological patterns in students' lives in the digital era.

2. Manifestation of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) Among Students

Based on interview findings, FoMO emerged as a form of digital social anxiety experienced by students when they were unable to access social media for a certain period. Several students expressed discomfort when they were unaware of the latest conversations in

peer groups, trending social media content, or ongoing peer activities. FoMO was also reflected in repetitive smartphone checking, especially when notifications appeared. Students demonstrated a tendency to feel worried if they did not immediately respond to incoming information. Some students even reported anxiety when they did not bring their smartphones to school or lacked internet access.

This phenomenon indicates that FoMO is not merely a habit of social media use but has evolved into a psychological response driven by the need for social connectedness. Within adolescent development, the desire to feel accepted and avoid exclusion from social groups becomes a dominant factor encouraging FoMO behavior. These findings align with the theory proposed by Andrew K. Przybylski et al. (2013), which explains that FoMO arises from concerns about missing valuable social experiences. Among madrasah students, such anxiety is related not only to digital information but also to maintaining peer relationships.

urthermore, the manifestation of FoMO is also reflected in a strong emotional drive to remain constantly connected to the digital environment. Students feel socially left behind when they are not immediately aware of the latest information shared by their peers. This condition indicates that social media has become a primary source of social validation, where delays in responding to information can create feelings of discomfort. This reinforces the idea that FoMO is not only behavioral in nature but also involves emotional aspects that influence students' daily lives (Przybylski et al., 2013; Rahmawati, 2020).

Moreover, FoMO may also lead to habitual dependence on mobile devices in everyday life. Students tend to find it difficult to detach themselves from their smartphones due to the fear of missing important information or social moments within their peer environment. In the long term, this condition may disrupt the balance between digital social activities and academic activities at school. Therefore, FoMO should be understood as a psychological phenomenon closely related to adolescent social interaction patterns in the digital era (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017; Nasrullah, 2015).

3. The Impact of FoMO on Learning Concentration and Self-Regulation

Observations revealed that FoMO significantly affects students' learning concentration. Several students appeared unable to maintain focus during lessons, particularly when distracted by smartphone notifications or the urge to check social media. Teachers also reported that some students were less active in classroom discussions, easily distracted, and less attentive to instructional explanations. This condition suggests that students' attention is divided between academic activities and the need to remain digitally connected.

From an educational psychology perspective, this condition is associated with weakened self-regulated learning. Self-regulation refers to an individual's ability to consciously control attention, motivation, and learning behavior (Zimmerman, 2002). When students are unable to regulate their impulses to access social media, learning becomes less effective. FoMO creates cognitive distraction, in which attention is not fully directed toward academic tasks. As a result, students may struggle to understand learning materials, experience reduced academic engagement, and display lower-quality classroom interaction.

These findings support research by Daria J. Kuss and Mark D. Griffiths (2017), which suggests that the intensity of social media use can influence adolescents' concentration and psychological stability. Furthermore, Oberst et al. (2017) explain that FoMO acts as a mediator reinforcing psychological disturbances caused by excessive social media use.

Furthermore, FoMO also contributes to the fragmentation of students' attention during classroom learning activities. Students tend to shift their focus between instructional content and digital stimuli such as notifications, messages, or updates from social media platforms. This continuous attentional switching reduces the depth of cognitive processing and weakens students' ability to sustain concentration over time. As a result, learning becomes less meaningful because students are not fully engaged in the instructional process (Sari, 2019;

Fitriani, 2021).

In addition, the weakening of self-regulation caused by FoMO also affects students' academic responsibility and learning discipline. Students who experience high levels of FoMO are more likely to prioritize online interactions over classroom engagement, which leads to reduced participation and incomplete understanding of learning materials. This condition indicates that FoMO not only disrupts cognitive focus but also influences behavioral control in learning situations. Therefore, strengthening self-regulated learning skills becomes essential to help students manage digital distractions effectively (Zimmerman, 2002; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

4. FoMO as a Psychological Challenge in the Context of Madrasah Education

In the context of madrasah education, FoMO is understood not only as an individual psychological phenomenon but also as a pedagogical challenge related to character formation. Madrasahs emphasize balance between academic, spiritual, and moral dimensions. Research findings indicate that students experiencing FoMO often struggle to maintain attention and learning discipline. This condition may hinder the internalization of religious values, which are central to madrasah education.

Islamic education emphasizes self-control as a key component of character development. The concept of *mujahadah an-nafs*—self-discipline and control over desires—serves as an important foundation for balancing worldly and spiritual needs. In this context, FoMO may be understood as a modern challenge requiring strengthened religious values and self-awareness. Students with stronger self-control tend to limit social media use during learning activities, whereas those with weaker self-control are more vulnerable to distraction and reduced engagement. Thus, FoMO in madrasah environments is associated not only with technology use but also with character building and spiritual reinforcement.

Furthermore, in the madrasah context, FoMO also challenges the effectiveness of value-based education that emphasizes moral and spiritual development. The strong pull of digital connectivity often competes with the internalization of Islamic values such as discipline, self-control, and responsibility. When students are more focused on maintaining online presence, their engagement in reflective and value-oriented learning tends to decrease. This condition highlights the importance of integrating digital awareness within Islamic education to ensure that technological use does not weaken character development (Nasrullah, 2015; Arnett, 2015).

In addition, FoMO reflects the tension between modern digital lifestyles and traditional educational values in madrasah settings. Students are required not only to achieve academic success but also to develop spiritual maturity and emotional control. However, the presence of FoMO can disrupt this balance by encouraging impulsive digital behavior and reducing self-awareness in learning situations. Therefore, strengthening self-control through Islamic character education becomes essential to help students manage digital pressures and maintain harmony between technological engagement and religious values (Sarwono, 2016; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

5. Strategies to Overcome FoMO in the Learning Process

Based on the findings, several strategies may help minimize the impact of FoMO on student learning. First, strengthening digital literacy is essential to increase students' awareness of healthy and proportional social media use. Digital literacy involves not only technological skills but also understanding the psychological effects of social media. Second, teachers should implement more interactive and participatory learning models to encourage active student engagement. Emotional and social involvement in learning may reduce students' tendency to seek stimulation from social media.

Third, character education grounded in Islamic values should be reinforced through discipline, self-control, and spiritual awareness. Religious values can serve as an internal foundation for managing digital behavior wisely. Fourth, collaboration between teachers and

parents is important in establishing healthy social media usage patterns. Consistent supervision and effective communication may help students develop more adaptive digital habits. The findings demonstrate that FoMO is a real psychological phenomenon experienced by students at MTs Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang. FoMO is associated not only with social media intensity but also with learning concentration, self-regulation, and academic engagement. In the madrasah context, FoMO becomes a complex challenge because it relates to adolescent psychological development as well as religious character formation. Students experiencing FoMO often face tension between digital social needs and academic responsibilities.

This study strengthens the FoMO theory developed by Andrew K. Przybylski et al., while providing a new perspective by situating FoMO within the context of Islamic education. The novelty of this research lies in analyzing FoMO as a psychological challenge influencing learning processes in madrasahs rather than merely as digital behavior (Przybylski et al., 2013). Therefore, FoMO should be understood as a contemporary educational issue requiring a multidimensional approach encompassing psychological, pedagogical, social, and religious dimensions. Such an approach is essential to help students maintain a healthy balance between digital life and academic responsibility.

Furthermore, the implementation of these strategies requires a holistic approach involving all educational stakeholders in the school environment. Teachers, parents, and school institutions need to work together to create a consistent environment that supports healthy digital behavior. Without this collaboration, efforts to reduce FoMO may not be effective because students will still be exposed to uncontrolled digital stimuli outside the classroom. Therefore, a coordinated approach is essential to ensure that digital literacy and self-control values are consistently reinforced both at school and at home (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2016; Nasrullah, 2015).

In addition, strengthening students' self-regulation skills is a key long-term strategy in addressing FoMO in learning processes. Students need to be trained to manage their attention, control impulses, and prioritize academic responsibilities over digital distractions. Integrating character education with reflective learning activities can help students become more aware of their digital behavior and its consequences. Through continuous guidance, students are expected to develop a balanced lifestyle that integrates academic achievement, emotional stability, and responsible use of technology in the digital era (Zimmerman, 2002; Arnett, 2015).

No	Findings	Brief Results
1	Intensity of social media use	Students are highly active in using social media (WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) every day, including during school hours.
2	Manifestation of FoMO	Anxiety about missing information appears, frequent phone checking, and discomfort when not connected.
3	Impact on learning concentration	Students are easily distracted by notifications, leading to reduced focus during learning.
4	Impact on self-regulation	Students have difficulty controlling social media use during classroom activities.
5	FoMO in madrasah context & solutions	FoMO affects character and discipline; therefore, digital literacy, active learning, Islamic character education, and collaboration between teachers and parents are needed.

Conclusion

1. The findings indicate that Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is a psychological phenomenon

experienced by students at MTs Futuhiyyah Kudu Semarang as a result of the high intensity of social media use in daily life. Students' need to remain continuously connected to information, activities, and social interactions in digital spaces generates anxiety when they feel left behind by their peer environment.

2. The manifestation of FoMO is reflected in behaviors such as frequently checking smartphones, difficulty shifting attention away from social media notifications, and feelings of discomfort when not being aware of the latest information. These conditions indicate that FoMO is not merely related to social media usage habits but also represents a psychological response associated with the need for social connectedness during early adolescence.
3. FoMO affects the learning process, particularly in terms of learning concentration, academic engagement, and students' self-regulation. The urge to remain connected to social media causes attention distraction, resulting in decreased learning focus, reduced classroom participation, and less effective comprehension of learning materials.
4. In the context of madrasah education, FoMO is not only an individual psychological challenge but also a pedagogical issue related to character formation and self-control. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy, self-regulation, and character education based on Islamic values is necessary through collaboration among teachers, parents, and schools to help students use social media wisely and maintain a balance between digital life and academic responsibilities.

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