



## Research Article

# Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Social Media Addiction, and Academic Stress: A Quantitative Study among High School Students in Sukoharjo Regency

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The rapid development of the internet and social media has driven the emergence of the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) phenomenon among adolescents, which can evolve into social media addiction and trigger academic stress. This study aims to examine the effect of FoMO and social media addiction on academic stress among high school students in Sukoharjo Regency.

**Method:** This research used a quantitative analytic design with a cross-sectional approach. The sample consisted of 110 high school students aged 15–19 years in Sukoharjo Regency, selected through accidental sampling. Data were collected using validated questionnaires, including the FoMO Scale, BSMAS, and ESSA. A multiple linear regression model was applied to analyze the collected data.

**Results:** The results showed that FoMO partially had a significant positive effect on academic stress ( $t = 3.611$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Social media addiction also partially had a significant positive effect on academic stress ( $t = 3.422$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). Simultaneously, FoMO and social media addiction significantly affected academic stress ( $F = 22.284$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), contributing 29% to the variance in academic stress.

**Conclusion:** FoMO and social media addiction significantly escalate academic stress among high school students in Sukoharjo Regency, acting as both partial and simultaneous contributors.

**Keywords:** Academic stress; FoMO; High school; Social media addiction; Student

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, the rapid development of information technology has become an inseparable part of people's lives. The internet serves as a means of fulfilling various human

needs, ranging from social interaction to access to information.<sup>1</sup> In Indonesia, internet penetration reached 77% ( $\pm 210$  million people) in 2021–2022, making Indonesia the fourth-ranked country with the most internet users after China, India, and the US, with Java Island contributing 43.92% of users, 99.26% of whom were students and university students. In early 2023, Facebook recorded 119.9 million users in Indonesia, equivalent to 43.4% of the total population. Other platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok also experienced rapid growth. The 2024 APJII survey noted that internet penetration in Indonesia reached 79.5%. Among online user groups, Generation Z (born 1997–2012) accounted for 34.40%, followed by Millennials (born 1981–1996) at 30.62%.<sup>2</sup>

The expansion of internet access has given rise to various social media platforms that facilitate real-time interaction and information exchange. This condition triggered the emergence of fear of missing out (FoMO), namely the anxiety about missing out on content shared by others.<sup>3,4</sup> FoMO was first introduced by Patrick McGinnis in 2004 as a form of worry about missing out on others' social experiences.<sup>5</sup> FoMO is illustrated by the 2018 Qualtrics Survey, which showed that almost 40% of US millennials (18–34 years) are willing to go into debt to stay connected, and by the 2016 The Harris Poll survey, which noted a similar proportion of US internet users who are worried about missing out on information if not connected.<sup>6,7</sup> FoMO arises from the human instinctual drive to gain acceptance within a group and is reinforced by popular culture emphasizing trends and social image.<sup>8</sup>

This phenomenon is further magnified by the proliferation of information technology and social networks, disproportionately affecting adolescents who are in the midst of identity formation and actively seeking social acceptance.<sup>9</sup> Among adolescents, FoMO causes anxiety about missing out on every social update in online media.<sup>10</sup> It is this perception that makes the flow of information on social media platforms feel increasingly fast, prompting users to scroll through screens repeatedly in a short time to ensure they do not miss a single update.<sup>11,12</sup> This pattern commonly transitions into social network addiction, which manifests as disproportionate usage levels and a loss of control over the time spent online.<sup>13</sup>

Teenagers addicted to social networks generally display extreme usage patterns, routinely spending over five hours a day online to the point that it hinders their everyday activities.<sup>14</sup> Typical symptoms include a compulsive urge to constantly check for updates, neglect of face-to-face interactions, and a decline in the quality of interpersonal relationships. Academic pressure, feelings of loneliness, and low self-control further exacerbate this condition.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, adolescents face an increased risk of anxiety and depression through social comparison, sleep pattern disturbances, and a decrease in well-being due to excessive prioritization of online activities over real life.<sup>3,16</sup> Excessive social media addiction contributes to the decline in academic achievement due to disrupted concentration and time management. Anxiety over declining academic results subsequently triggers academic stress, marked by anxiety facing assignments and exams, feeling pressured to meet expectations, and emotional burden in maintaining academic achievement.<sup>17</sup>

Data from the Central Statistics Agency of Sukoharjo Regency in 2025 recorded the population of Sukoharjo Regency in 2024 at 916,472, of whom 70,510 were adolescents aged 15–19 years.<sup>18</sup> The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Use Survey conducted by the Sukoharjo Regency Communication and Informatics Office in 2022 revealed that the majority of internet service users have a high school/equivalent education at 44%, 51% of internet

users consider the existence of the internet very important, and 58% stated they would face difficulties if they could not access the internet for one day. 51% of users reported accessing the internet 1–4 hours per day, and 47% used it primarily to interact on social media.<sup>19</sup>

The necessity for this investigation stems from the surging online activity among adolescents in Sukoharjo Regency, a segment recognized as one of the most digitally immersed demographics. Adolescents aged 15–19 years are the population segment most active in using social media for communication, self-expression, and access to popular trends. The FoMO phenomenon is increasingly dominant in adolescents' digital interaction patterns, driving compulsive and excessive social media use. This condition has the potential to develop into a form of social media addiction marked by disrupted concentration, decreased time management, and a decline in academic achievement. Emotional pressure from the fear of missing out on specific information or trends also triggers significant academic stress. Considering that high school adolescents are the future generation for national development, the sustainability of their mental health and academic achievement is a strategic issue that requires comprehensive study. This study aims to examine the effect of FoMO and social media addiction on academic stress among high school students in Sukoharjo Regency.

## METHOD

This quantitative analytic research employed a cross-sectional design. The study was conducted among high school students aged 15–19 years in Sukoharjo Regency. A sample of 110 respondents was derived from 70,510 adolescents using purposive sampling. The determination of the minimum sample size in this study follows the guideline for multiple regression analysis, which recommends the formula  $N \geq 104 + m$ , where  $m$  represents the number of independent variables.<sup>20</sup> Given that this research includes two independent variables (fear of missing out and social media addiction), the minimum required sample size is 106 respondents. The sample was drawn from students of SMA Negeri 1 Sukoharjo. Inclusion was limited to active high school students in Sukoharjo Regency who used social media and provided consent to complete the questionnaire; those with incomplete responses or who dropped out were excluded.

Data were collected using standardized, previously validated self-administered questionnaires, and responses were obtained via Google Forms. Only students who met the inclusion criteria and received the link were eligible to participate in completing the questionnaire. The independent variables were FoMO and social media addiction, while the dependent variable was academic stress. FoMO was measured using a 12-item scale adapted for Indonesian adolescents.<sup>9</sup> Social media addiction was assessed using the 18-item Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), which was adapted into Indonesian.<sup>21</sup> Academic stress was evaluated using the 16-item Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA) developed by Sun et al. in 2011.<sup>22</sup> All instruments used a 5-point Likert scale and were pretested with 30 non-sample respondents to ensure validity and reliability. The validity test results demonstrated that all items were valid ( $r\text{-count} > r\text{-table } 0.361$ ), with the FoMO scale showing  $r\text{-count}$  values between 0.517 and 0.831, the social media addiction scale between 0.682 and 0.878, and the academic stress scale between 0.677 and 0.900. Furthermore, the reliability test yielded high Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of 0.938, 0.964, and 0.963, respectively, indicating that all instruments were highly reliable for data collection.

Data were analyzed quantitatively. The evaluation used descriptive statistics to present participant demographics, followed by multiple linear regression to examine the individual and combined effects of fear of missing out (FoMO) and social media addiction on academic stress, and to assess the model's coefficient of determination.

## RESULTS

This study involved 110 high school students in Sukoharjo Regency as respondents. Respondents' demographic characteristics were grouped based on gender, age, and number of social media accounts owned.

**Table 1.** Respondent Characteristics (N=110)

| Variable                        | Category | n (%)     |
|---------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Gender                          | Male     | 50 (45.5) |
|                                 | Female   | 60 (54.5) |
| Age (yo)                        | 15       | 31 (28.2) |
|                                 | 16       | 17 (15.5) |
|                                 | 17       | 24 (21.8) |
|                                 | 18       | 27 (24.5) |
|                                 | 19       | 11 (10.0) |
| Number of social media accounts | < 3      | 36 (32.7) |
|                                 | ≥ 3      | 74 (67.3) |

As shown in Table 1, most respondents in this study were female, totaling 60 students (54.5%), while males totaled 50 students (45.5%). In terms of age, the largest group was 15-year-olds, with 31 students (28.2%). Regarding social media ownership, dominance was observed among students with three or more accounts, totaling 74 students (67.3%), indicating a high level of exposure to digital platforms in the sample. The most reported social media platforms were WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter).

**Table 2.** Multiple Linear Regression Test Results

| Variable                   | Regression Coefficient | t-count | Sig.  |
|----------------------------|------------------------|---------|-------|
| Konstanta                  | 20.107                 |         |       |
| Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) | 0.376                  | 3.611   | 0.000 |
| Social Media Addiction     | 0.275                  | 3.422   | 0.001 |
| F-test                     | = 22.284               |         | 0.000 |
| R Square                   | = 0.29                 |         |       |

As presented in Table 2, the results of the multiple linear regression analysis ( $Y = 20.107 + 0.376X_1 + 0.275X_2$ ) showed that FoMO and social media addiction were positively associated with academic stress. Partial testing (t-test) showed that FoMO ( $p\text{-value} < 0.001 < 0.05$ ) and social media addiction ( $p\text{-value} (0.001) < 0.05$ ) each individually exerted a significant effect on the increase in academic stress among high school adolescents. In line with this, the simultaneous test results (F-test) with a  $p\text{-value} (< 0.001) < 0.05$  confirmed that the two independent variables together also had a highly significant effect on academic stress, with the model's ability to explain the variance in stress levels (coefficient of determination/ $R^2$ ) at

29%. At the same time, other factors outside the scope of this study influenced the remaining 71%.

## **DISCUSSION**

The partial hypothesis test (t-test) demonstrated that the FoMO variable had a positive and statistically significant effect on academic stress. This finding suggests that students experiencing higher levels of fear of missing out tend to report a greater burden of academic stress. This phenomenon is in line with the theory stating that FoMO triggers excessive feelings of anxiety when individuals feel disconnected from social interaction in the virtual world.<sup>23</sup> Among adolescents aged 15-19 years in the identity search phase, the need to always be connected to and recognized by their peer group is very strong. The psychological drive to constantly monitor the latest trends and compare personal achievements with the idealized lives displayed by others on social media causes students to lose focus on their physical reality.<sup>24</sup>

Fear of missing out has emerged as a prevalent psychological phenomenon among adolescents and students, often manifesting during periods of academic obligation such as studying or preparing for examinations. Empirical evidence indicates that FoMO is associated with heightened anxiety, fatigue, stress, and reduced sleep quality, all of which contribute to increased academic stress. In the present study, FoMO was found to influence students' academic burden significantly.<sup>25</sup> FoMO also makes students unable to resist using their smartphones during lessons, which is strongly linked to attention distraction and low learning engagement. This condition illustrates how FoMO undermines concentration, reduces learning efficiency, triggers panic as deadlines approach, and ultimately intensifies academic stress.<sup>26</sup>

The argument regarding the destructive impact of FoMO is further strengthened by other empirical findings proving a positive and significant correlation between FoMO syndrome and the escalation of academic pressure. Analysis in that research confirmed that anxiety caused by missing out on the experiences of others contributed substantially, affecting up to 35.2% of the total increase in students' academic stress. Furthermore, this literature reveals a disparity in psychological vulnerability driven by gender factors. The female group was found to have a much higher probability of experiencing severe FoMO compared to males.<sup>27</sup> This finding is highly relevant and can explain the dynamics observed in this study, given that the majority of respondents were female students. The high psychological tendency of adolescent girls to reactively respond to the social existence of others in the virtual world automatically makes them the group most vulnerable to mental exhaustion, which ultimately manifests as high academic stress at school.<sup>28</sup>

Consistent with previous findings, FoMO has been shown to trigger anxiety, stress, and feelings of inferiority among adolescents. These psychological disturbances are closely related to academic stress, as students who experience FoMO tend to feel overwhelmed by academic demands and dissatisfied with their own performance. Qualitative research that dissects the psychological roots of the FoMO phenomenon uses the lens of Self-Determination Theory. The results of the research revealed that adolescent behavior on social media is largely driven by three fundamental mental needs: the desire for freedom of exploration

(autonomy), the need to be recognized within the social circle (relatedness), and the desire to appear capable by following the latest trends (competence). The problem is that when adolescents see posts about togetherness or happiness from their peers without their involvement, the fulfillment of these social needs is threatened. This emotional clash directly triggers cognitive dissonance that manifests into acute low self-esteem, anxiety, and significant stress.<sup>29</sup> Specifically, FoMO creates role conflict in adolescents. On the one hand, they are required to complete academic responsibilities such as doing homework and preparing for exams. On the other hand, the fear of missing out on information forces them to continually attend to the gadget screen. This split in concentration ultimately lowers learning efficiency, triggers panic as task deadlines approach, and culminates in a drastic increase in academic stress.

The second finding from the partial test revealed that social media addiction had a positive and statistically significant influence on academic stress. This indicates that students who engage in more intensive social media use, to the point of addictive behavior, tend to experience higher levels of academic pressure. This condition is supported by the study's demographic findings, which show that most respondents (67.3%) own and manage three or more social media accounts, most commonly WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). This multi-account ownership increases the chances of excessive screen time. Students who have entered the addiction phase often experience a loss of self-control over the time they spend online, which in turn disrupts crucial daily routines such as sleep hours and independent study time.<sup>30</sup>

The dynamics between the intensity of digital platform use and psychological pressure in the educational realm inherently form a mutually reinforcing cycle. The findings in this research align with previous studies confirming the existence of this reciprocal relationship, in which high academic demands at school often drive students to seek immediate escapes to divert their attention from fatigue.<sup>16,31</sup> In stressful situations, adolescents tend to use gadgets and virtual interactions as coping mechanisms to reduce tension. Consequently, activities that initially aimed as a temporary means of recreation (escaping) slowly develop into habituation that culminates in addiction.<sup>15,32</sup>

In stressful situations, adolescents tend to use gadgets and virtual interactions as a coping mechanism to reduce tension.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, activities that initially aimed as a temporary means of recreation (escaping) slowly develop into habituation that culminates in addiction. Physiologically, exposure to light from gadget screens done continuously while scrolling through social media at night has been proven to suppress melatonin hormone secretion.<sup>34</sup> The inhibition of the production of this sleep-inducing hormone makes it difficult for adolescents to achieve optimal physical and mental recovery phases. As a result, this sleep deprivation causes chronic fatigue, a deficit in concentration power, and worsening emotional regulation.<sup>35</sup> When students' cognitive and physical capacities are exhausted by poor sleep quality, they automatically lose the resilience to handle the school workload, ultimately triggering an uncontrollable explosion of academic stress.<sup>36</sup>

The decline in the quality and quantity of study time due to compulsive social media use directly impacts the deterioration of students' academic performance at school. When learning achievement declines, students will face unfulfilled expectations from teachers and parents, as well as fear of future failure. It is this series of negative consequences that manifests as

academic stress, in which students feel pressured, hopeless, and excessively anxious when facing educational demands.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, academic stress itself drives students to escape into the virtual world compulsively. This confirms the need for interventions that are not only limited to restricting digital access but also providing structured psychoeducational guidance services to equip students with more adaptive stress management.

The F-test results confirmed that fear of missing out (FoMO) and social media addiction collectively had a statistically significant influence on the academic stress experienced by high school students in Sukoharjo Regency. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) analysis confirmed that these two variables explained 29% of the total variance in respondents' academic stress levels. This finding confirms the existence of a mutually reinforcing cycle between the fear of missing out on information and addictive behavior. Anxiety due to FoMO acts as an initial trigger that pushes students to open social media applications repeatedly. The repetition of this action slowly shapes habituation that leads to digital addiction.<sup>38</sup> This combination of psychological dependence (FoMO) and behavioral dependence (addiction) drains students' cognitive and emotional energy. As a result, their mental capacity to process learning materials and cope with pressure in the school environment becomes highly limited.

The remaining percentage of 71% that was unexplained by the regression model in this study indicates that academic stress and digital addiction are multivariate psychological phenomena. This is in line with other empirical findings highlighting that addiction to online platforms is also strongly triggered by individuals' inability to self-regulate, as well as the emergence of feelings of alienation or loneliness.<sup>39,40</sup> Other research shows that low self-control and high levels of loneliness strongly correlate with spikes in the intensity of uncontrolled social media use. Additionally, high academic demands are a catalyst that drives students to use the virtual world as an emotional escape.<sup>41</sup>

Other literature reviews identify that FoMO syndrome and stress conditions actually occupy the position as the main internal determinants that drive the formation of addictive behavior. At the same time, external factors such as the motivation to seek instant entertainment and the desire to present one's self-image in the virtual world further intensify students' attachment to screens.<sup>42</sup> Results from other literature reviews also further affirm the existence of complex cyclical patterns where the inability to regulate internal emotions and a lack of social interaction trigger addiction. This addiction then disrupts study focus to the point of triggering academic stress, and then the stress itself further aggravates the level of escapism (addiction).<sup>11,12</sup> The massive amount of time spent monitoring the virtual lives of others causes frustration, mental fatigue, and a significant increase in stress.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, strategies to address mental health problems and optimize students' academic achievement require a holistic approach. The interventions provided must not rely solely on restricting access to gadgets. Still, they must be balanced by strengthening emotional literacy, training in self-control, and fostering an inclusive and supportive school social climate.

## CONCLUSION

FoMO and social media addiction were significantly associated with higher academic stress among adolescents. However, given the cross-sectional design, causal relationships cannot

be established, and other psychosocial factors may contribute substantially to academic stress.

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### **Declarations**

#### **Authors' contributions**

B.A.P. conceptualized the research design, conducted data collection, performed the data analysis, and wrote the manuscript.

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#### **Conflict of interest**

There is no conflict of interest in this research.

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