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Navigating the Fear of Missing Out: A Narrative Analysis of Filipino Adolescents' Experiences of Fear of Missing Out

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Abstract

Aim/Purpose: The purpose of this study was to understand the personal narratives of Filipino adolescents about the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and how it affects their overall life situations. By delving into their experiences, this research aimed to uncover the unique ways that FOMO shapes their emotions, behaviors, and social interactions, providing a deeper insight into their daily struggles and coping mechanisms.

Introduction/Background: The study encapsulated the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), a common experience among active social media users, especially young people. Social media is a platform where contents are filtered, and only happy and joyful moments are seen. Because of the frequent posting of happy moments and successes on social media, many people perceive others' lives as perfect and feel pitiful about their own lives. People feel that they are not included or that their lives are lacking compared to others. Studies have found that FOMO has a negative impact on self-esteem and mental well-being, and excessive use of social media makes it worse, as it can create negative feelings of envy towards what individuals perceive from social media.

Methodology: A qualitative research design that used narrative analysis was chosen to examine how Filipino youth experience Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in relation to social media use and offline interactions. The study was conducted in the City of Cagayan de Oro, located in the northern part of Mindanao. The researchers selected eight (8) Filipino youths aged 13 to 18 who had experienced FOMO.

To obtain the necessary data, a semi-structured interview guide created by the researchers was used as the main research instrument. Since some participants were minors, a consent form was prepared to inform parents of the purpose and method of the study to address ethical considerations. Upon obtaining consent, the researchers set up an interview schedule with each participant. The participants were also asked to fill out an assent form. The researchers utilized open-ended questions to allow participants to reveal their experiences of FOMO. The researchers made audio recordings of the interviews to ensure data accuracy and reliability. The recordings were then transcribed to facilitate analysis.

In terms of data analysis, the researchers utilized three levels of narrative analysis: personal, positional, and societal. On a personal level, participants' individual experiences and how they personally experienced FOMO were explored. At the positional level, differences in the social positions of the narrator and the listener were examined. The societal level looked at society's broader view of FOMO, and how it is affected by social factors.

The data analysis was divided into three parts: beginning, middle, and end. The beginning focused on the individual or personal impact of FOMO. The middle part examined the influence of social

networks and relationships with others, especially the role of social belongingness. The final section focused on the broader impact of social media on FOMO, specifically the value of online visibility and social media as a source of personal satisfaction and confidence.

Findings: The results showed that due to social media, Filipino adolescents experienced FOMO which affected their self-worth, emotional well-being, and sense of belonging. The frequency of social media use affected adolescents significantly. Many relied on likes and reactions for validation, feeling inadequate when they received little engagement, while social comparisons intensified feelings of exclusion and self-doubt. Peer pressure pushed them to maintain an idealized online presence, often conflicting with their true selves and creating a struggle between social belonging and personal values.

Additionally, what individuals perceived on social media affected their self-perception, conflicting with their overall well-being. Some participants recognized the need to detach their self-worth from social media, focusing instead on real-life experiences, personal growth, and meaningful relationships. The findings revealed that social media contributes significantly to feelings of inadequacy and anxiety, with adolescents often comparing themselves to others' curated online personas. Despite temporary validation through online engagement, many participants reported a cycle of dependence on social media to avoid missing out. In contrast, in-person interactions offered a sense of belonging and relief from exclusion.

Contribution/Impact on Society: The study highlighted the psychological and social impacts of FOMO, and calls for interventions such as digital literacy programs and peer support groups to help adolescents healthily navigate these challenges.

Recommendations: It is recommended that educators, parents, and mental health professionals help reduce the feeling of FOMO among adolescents by promoting social media literacy, encouraging open discussions, and providing coping strategies to build self-esteem and resilience against FOMO.

Research Limitation: Due to the cultural context, the FOMO discussion may have unique characteristics that would not occur elsewhere.

Future Research: Future research should explore the nuances of FOMO in different cultural contexts to provide a broader understanding of its impact and how to develop more effective interventions. Additionally, exploring the role of parental guidance and educational interventions in mitigating FOMO could provide valuable insights into preventive measures.

Keywords: *Fear-of-missing-out, adolescents, narrative analysis, self-worth, social media*

Introduction

Fear of missing out (FOMO) is a phenomenon usually encountered among active social media users. People often document or show their happy moments in life, successes, and fun times on social media. With too much use of social media, people with less exciting lives feel FOMO: a feeling that they are not doing enough things that other people are doing. They may feel they are behind others whose lives are more adventurous and successful. People with less eventful lives tend to feel that they're missing out on life, when in fact every individual has different phases in life. FOMO appears to be a common experience and has recently become part of the vernacular, receiving frequent mentions in popular media (Milyavskaya et al., 2018).

The term FOMO became more prevalent with the increasing use of social media. It has affected many adolescents' general well-being. According to Barry and Wong (2020), high levels of FOMO have been linked to both loneliness and low self-esteem across age cohorts, especially for those who use social media more frequently. People who use social media extensively may find that FOMO about other people's activities is especially distressing. This implies that feelings about FOMO negatively impact individuals' self-esteem.

A study conducted by Hunt et al. (2018) showed that limiting the use of social media significantly lowered loneliness and depression when compared to those who more frequently used social media.

According to a study by Reyes et al. (2018) in the Philippines, FOMO was significantly related to both social media usage and Problematic Internet use, and fear of missing out can predict both social media use and problematic internet use. People experiencing FOMO are more likely to use social media frequently and may develop unhealthy Internet habits.

The existing literature reveals a research gap and lack of understanding about FOMO among adolescents. This study thus sought to address this by acknowledging how the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is understood by the present generation through the use of narrative analysis. Dogan's (2019) exploration of self-construal and its link to FOMO highlighted cultural differences between Western and Asian societies. Western cultures, being more individualistic, prioritize personal independence and achievements, leading to less sensitivity to FOMO. In contrast, Asian cultures, including the Philippines, are collectivist, where individuals define themselves through social relationships and group inclusion. This interdependent self-construal makes individuals in collectivist cultures more likely to experience FOMO, as missing out on social events or group activities threatens their sense of belonging and harmony. Moreover, a study by Karimkhan and Chapa (2021) found that FOMO was highly influenced by cultural factors, such as language consumption and collectivist values. This study provided context for the current research, which investigated FOMO among Filipino adolescents—part of a collectivist culture where social belonging and group harmony are highly valued. The present study further explored how social media usage in both English and ethnic languages may contribute to the experience of FOMO, and its impact on adolescent well-being.

This study aimed to explore the narratives of Filipino adolescents regarding the fear of missing out. Its goal was to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon and its impact on adolescents' general well-being, revealing the deeper nature of FOMO and how it influences self-perception. The study endeavors to make a significant contribution to the study of this phenomenon, serving as a reliable source of information and a foundation for the study of FOMO among Filipino adolescents.

Literature Review

The concept of Fear of Missing Out was introduced in 2004. It describes the phenomenon where individuals perceive they are missing out on experiences, and thus compulsively maintain social connections. It is associated with the need to belong, and negatively impacts mental health, social functioning, sleep, academic performance, and physical well-being (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). Adolescents are prone to feelings of FOMO due to the spread of social media in the present day. Research has shown that 55% of subjects aged 15 to 18 experienced FOMO.

According to a survey, envy is the leading emotion associated with FOMO, with 39% of respondents reporting this feeling (FinancesOnline, 2024). As technology and social media use becomes more pervasive, people become more and more vulnerable to FOMO. Adolescents increasingly spend time in digital environments, with social media becoming the dominant leisure activity (Barry et al., 2020. This extensive online engagement can lead to FOMO, defined as the desire to stay connected, and the constant urge to check social media (Abel et al., 2016). Despite the benefits of social media, its excessive use can contribute to negative outcomes such as anxiety and Internet addiction, particularly in adolescents (Barry et al., 2020; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Another study involving 386 undergraduates explored the relationship between social media use, the fear of missing out (FOMO), and various mental and physical health outcomes. The findings indicated that higher levels of FOMO were associated with increased time spent on social media, as well as more depressive symptoms, less mindful attention, and more physical symptoms. Notably, when FOMO was accounted for, the link between time spent on social media and depressive symptoms or mindful attention was no longer significant. This suggests that FOMO may serve as a more revealing measure of the negative health effects of social media use (Baker et al., 2016). This implies that the frequency of social media use can affect individuals' feelings associated with FOMO. The higher the frequency of social media use, the higher the risk of individuals feeling depressive symptoms associated with FOMO.

Increasingly, social interaction has gone from physical to digital spaces. There is much concern regarding the depth and authenticity of these new digital interactions, issues of personal privacy, and the decreased rate of genuine connections. Constant connectivity and social media engagement heighten awareness of others' activities and achievements, exacerbating feelings of exclusion and inadequacy (Putra et al., 2004).

Fear of Missing Out can greatly impact how teens behave, especially when it makes them overly attached to social media (Abel et al., 2016). Teens with high FOMO often skip meals, lose sleep, or make poor decisions in order to stay connected with their friends online (Beyens et al., 2016). Feelings of FOMO among adolescents lead to poor physical and mental health, causing destructive effects on behavior. This can leave them feeling jealous, lonely, or unsure of themselves, affecting their mood, well-being, and overall wellness (Abel et al., 2016; Beyens et al., 2016). According to Montgomery (2024), almost half of adolescents feel worse about their bodies because of social media, where constant comparison to others often leads to feelings of inadequacy. The risks go beyond body image issues; excessive use of social media has also been linked to increased anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Dr. Vivek Murthy, the U.S. Surgeon General, recently raised concerns by advocating for warning labels on social media platforms, emphasizing that the safety of these platforms for young people's mental health is still unproven (Montgomery, 2024).

Several studies have looked into ways to reduce the negative effects of Fear of Missing Out, often focusing on cutting back on social media use. For example, reducing time on social media has been shown to lower feelings of loneliness and depression linked to FOMO (Hunt et al., 2018). A seven-day social media break helped participants feel less connected to FOMO, and they reported feeling better mentally and more socially connected (Brown & Kuss, 2020). This shows how less use of social media can have a positive impact on mental health.

Another approach, the FOMO Reduction method, includes tools like autoreplies and filtering, along with teaching coping skills like self-talk and the use of checklists (Alutaybi et al., 2020). Participants who used this method found it helpful in managing their FOMO, and the results showed improved mental well-being after a week without social media. These findings highlight the importance of reducing FOMO for better mental health, although more research is needed to understand how people cope with FOMO in their everyday lives.

According to Alabri (2022), the need to belong to a group emerged as the strongest cause of FOMO. Individuals don't want to feel left out, but always want to be included. This study, indicated that women have a higher need for belonging, so they experience FOMO more often. Feeling important to a group increases FOMO and social media use, but this effect is minor. Simply stated, people who seek acceptance in their social circle(s) are more likely to experience FOMO than those who need less validation. This shows how FOMO can vary depending on one's personal perspective.

According to Franchina et al. (2018), FOMO has a positive effect on how often young people use different social media platforms, and how many they actively use. The FOMO effect is stronger on platforms such as Facebook and Snapchat than other social media platforms. FOMO has also been linked to phubbing behavior, which is when a person interacts with their cellphone rather than the person they are physically with. The study also found that teens with higher FOMO use more types of social media platforms. This implied that the more active people are on social media, the more likely that they will develop FOMO. Furthermore, it has been determined that FOMO can explain Problematic Social Media Use.

Gao et al.'s (2023) study showed that fear of missing out (FOMO) was associated with mobile social media (MSM), which can increase depression. Additionally, phubbing or neglecting people by being too occupied on social media can cause damage to relationships. This may also increase the risk of depression and detachment from people. Additionally, the results showed that MSM-related FOMO had a clear and positive effect on college students' depression. This showed the importance of the right utilization of social media, and emphasized the importance of staying connected offline.

The study of Groenestein et al. (2024) examined the idea that FOMO can be understood as a lack of control caused by unfulfilled psychological needs and/or a low level of well-being. A lack of control

over the use of social media can lead to a pervasive impact on individuals' relationships and well-being. At the individual level, a partially reciprocal relationship was found between FOMO and social media use. This showed how FOMO was directly correlated to the frequency of social media use, and discipline in utilizing social media.

The results of Jabeen et al. (2023) showed that FOMO was stimulated by time cost and anxiety. FOMO also positively influences users' adoption of narcissistic admiration and rivalry processes. What individuals perceive from social media can influence their thinking and increase comparisons from what was shown in social media. This could influence behavior and thoughts. This study found that only social comparisons positively influenced fatigue. These findings raise significant implications for theory and practice, particularly for managing negative emotional states and for a tempered use of social media platforms. Moderate use of social media and self-discipline are necessary to avoid the negative implications of social media use that can cause feelings of FOMO.

Lang (2024) found that FOMO posed a threat to mental health as a new negative emotional experience in the Internet era. Mental health can be degraded easily, leaving people vulnerable. It is necessary to pay close attention to FOMO and its effects on one's mental health. Mindfulness group training is helpful, as it not only can improve mindfulness and reduce anxiety levels. It can help people cope with negative FOMO emotions, and thus to maintain strong mental health.

In summary, while social media can offer opportunities for connection and expression, they also bring significant challenges to adolescent mental health. Understanding the impact of FOMO, promoting a healthier relationship with digital spaces, and encouraging real-world social interactions are essential steps to support adolescents in navigating this digital age.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design with narrative analysis to explore how Filipino adolescents experienced FOMO. Narrative analysis focuses on understanding individual's stories, analyzing not only their content, but also the structure and meaning of their narratives. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how adolescents interpret their interactions with social media and peers. Guided by Murray's (2000) framework, this study investigated three levels of narrative analysis: personal, positional, and ideological. This design captures both psychological and social dimensions of the FOMO phenomenon.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in Cagayan de Oro City, located in the northern part of Mindanao, Philippines. According to Rosauro (2024), Cagayan De Oro is known as the "City of Golden Friendship," characterized by its diverse population, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant social atmosphere. The city serves as a significant hub for education, commerce, and tourism in the region, making it an ideal setting for examining the experiences of Filipino adolescents with FOMO.

Research Participants

The researchers selected Filipino adolescents aged 13 to 18 years who were experiencing FOMO. A purposive sample of eight respondents was used as subjects for the study, with a balanced representation of four males and four females, all from private schools. The participants were selected based on specific criteria, including their experiences related to the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and their engagement with social media. The participants' social media screen time averaged from 4-6 hours per day, usually spent after waking up, before sleeping, and during free time on school days and weekends. To ensure a diverse sample and representation, the researchers considered factors such as social circles and hours of social media usage.

Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect the data. The researchers created the interview question guide as the primary instrument for the study. The guide included open-ended questions aimed at eliciting participants' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors associated with FOMO in the context of their social media use and offline interactions. To ensure the reliability and relevance of the interview questions, the guide was validated by an outside expert. The instrument allowed for a deeper exploration of participants' personal narratives, providing valuable insights into the phenomenon. The interview format allowed the researchers to add follow-up questions, thus enabling further exploration of respondent insights during the interview process.

Data Gathering Procedure

To gather the data necessary for the study, the researchers interviewed individuals who fit its criteria and invited them to share their narratives. To ensure that ethical standards were followed throughout the data collection process, a consent form was drafted to obtain parental permission since some of the participants were underage. Before participating, all individuals received comprehensive information about the study's purpose and methodology. Written informed consent was obtained from parents, along with assent from the participants themselves. Upon obtaining consent, the researchers scheduled an interview with each of the respondents. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, lasting 45 to 60 minutes, with open-ended questions that allowed respondents to provide narratives of their lived experiences with FOMO. The interviews were audio-recorded to preserve the authenticity and reliability of the information. Upon gathering the data needed for the study, the researchers then transcribed the audio recordings, stored all transcripts, and removed identifiable data to maintain participant confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was guided by Murray's (2000) three levels of narrative analysis: personal, positional, and societal. The personal level focused on the personal experiences of the adolescents, capturing how they individually encountered FOMO. The positional level examined the differences in social position between the narrator and the listeners. Lastly, the societal level was about the socially shared stories of certain communities. The data analysis consisted of three chapters: the beginning, middle, and end. The beginning consisted of the individual or personal impacts of FOMO. The middle chapter focused on its social aspects, including the influence of social networks and peer relationships as factors of social belongingness. Lastly, the third chapter addressed the broader influence of social media on FOMO, highlighting the influence of FOMO in prioritizing visibility, along with social media as a source of fulfillment.

A rigorous process of repeated refinement was employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the themes identified in the study. Initially, themes were developed through open coding of the collected data by the research team, followed by consensus discussions to refine these preliminary themes. The next step involved peer review by mentors, whose feedback was incorporated to enhance the accuracy and relevance of the themes. Member checking was then conducted with a subset of participants to gather their feedback on the resonance of the themes with their personal experiences, leading to further adjustments. Finally, triangulation with existing literature and conceptual frameworks related to FOMO and adolescent behavior on social media was conducted. The research team held multiple discussions to ensure that the themes were comprehensive, well-supported by the data, and aligned with existing knowledge. This process of validation and refinement resulted in a robust and credible set of themes that accurately reflect adolescents' experiences of FOMO.

Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were addressed in the study. First and foremost, informed consent was obtained from both parents and participants. Consent was requested to ensure that the respondents willingly participated in the study. The researchers ensured that data collected from

participants were utilized ethically, ensuring that any identifiable personal information of respondents was removed to protect their identities. Additionally, the study was ethically reviewed by Xavier University's Research Ethics Office and followed applicable ethical standards of the Psychological Association of the Philippines /American Psychological Association in conducting the study.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study were categorized into three different themes namely: Personal, Positional, and Ideological. Each theme has a beginning, middle, and end. The themes reflect how FOMO affected Filipino adolescents psychologically, emotionally, and socially.

Table 1 *Adolescent Experiences of FOMO*

Chapters	Personal	Positional	Ideological
Beginning: Understanding the Personal Impact of FOMO	Experiences of Restructuring Self-Worth and Emotional Triggers for FOMO	Perceived role as a digital citizen	Enmeshed self-worth in online social media
Middle: Influence of Social Networks and Peer Relationships	Experiences of Socially Influenced Self-identity	Perceived role as a social being	Conflict between the desire for social belonging and personal values
End: Influence of Social Media	Experiences of prioritizing visibility as a source of personal fulfillment	Perceived role of adolescents as socially adjusted individuals	Self-Assurance against FOMO

Experiences of Restructuring Self-Worth

Participants described a change in how they perceived their self-worth, largely influenced by their social media interactions. Participants stated,

P1: "Before, I always felt good when people liked my posts. But now, I'm trying not to depend on it so much because I realized it doesn't define my worth."

P2: "When I don't get many likes, I feel like I'm not enough, and it's hard to shake that feeling."

Seeking validation on social media through reactions and likes affects individuals experience FOMO. It became a phenomenon wherein likes and reactions determined the worth of individuals. A larger number of likes and reactions signified one's higher self-worth. These emotional reactions highlight how FOMO can lead to a diminished sense of self-worth and social exclusion, making adolescents more vulnerable to feelings of inadequacy. It further highlights an evolving understanding of self-worth as adolescents mature and gain more control over their reliance on online validation.

Experiences of Emotional Triggers for FOMO

Adolescents identified specific emotional triggers that intensified their fear of missing out. Based on the data gathered, the feeling of being left behind arose when the participants witnessed social media posts about activities or events of which they were not a part. Participants said,

P2: "I saw a post of my friends hanging out without me, and I felt so left out, like maybe they didn't want me there."

P5: "When I see people posting about their trips or accomplishments, I can't help but compare myself and feel like I'm behind in life."

Social media has become a platform where people share significant life events. However, social media is filtered, showing only the beautiful side, and not the ugly side of life behind the camera. Individuals tend to compare their progress and life situation based on what is seen on social media. This further intensifies feelings of exclusion and self-doubt. The feeling of exclusion creates a sense of isolation and insignificance; being left behind in relevant events leads to negative self-perception.

Perceived Role as a Digital Citizen

Participants acknowledged their roles as digital citizens, often feeling pressured to maintain a curated and active online presence. Participants reported:

P6: “Social media creates pressure because people might overthink that you dislike them if you don’t react to their posts.”

P3: “Sometimes, it feels exhausting to keep up with everything online, but I don’t want to be left out or forgotten.”

Individuals tend to keep up on social media and show life updates to maintain their presence. This shows how FOMO drives individuals to stay connected through social media usage. This sense of responsibility reflects unwritten social media rules that one has to maintain a specific presence and become active in engaging with others’ content. However, the burden of these expectations also surfaced in their narratives. This balancing act between fulfilling digital expectations and preserving personal well-being underscored the complex role of digital citizenship in their lives.

Self-Worth Entangled with Online Social Media Presence

Results revealed how their self-worth was deeply tied to their online social media presence. Participants recounted:

P4: “Social media promotes the idea that everyone should always be doing something fun because of peer pressure.”

P7: “Social media creates jealousy, as people often post happy lives, while in-person interactions make me feel pressured to show happiness through photos, especially on vacations.”

Social media affects individuals' self-perception. This cycle of seeking validation through showing a happy life on social media affects individuals’ self-perception and self-worth. Staying relevant in social media and showing life events or activities signifies their worth. However, some participants have started to resist this entanglement. This shift demonstrated a growing awareness of the need to separate self-worth from online interactions.

Experiences of Socially Influenced Self-Identity

Participants described how their sense of self-identity was shaped by societal standards and peer influences. Participants related,

P7: "During vacation, I felt compelled to take photos to show a happy life, even though normally I wouldn’t care about posting."

P7: "Social media creates pressure to be visible and happy, which leads to jealousy and trying to imitate an unrealistic lifestyle."

This showed how social media can be one-sided or fake, with individuals tending to curate posts to maintain a specific image. This reflected how adolescents often conform to societal expectations to gain acceptance or approval. Because people on social media only show moments of life that are happy and relevant, and do not show the imperfections and oddness behind the camera, this creates a false sense of reality for other people. These statements highlight how external influences shape adolescents' behaviors, often blurring the line between their authentic selves and their socially constructed identities.

Perceived Role Within Social Groups: Family and Friends

The roles adolescents perceive within their social circles, especially among family and friends, emerged as significant. Participants explained,

P4: "I try to share posts about my family because it shows I care about them, even if I don't say it in person."

P6: "If I don't comment or react to my friends' posts, they might think I'm ignoring them."

This showed how there is constant pressure for individuals to keep up and maintain engagement with family and friends on social media. It illustrated how adolescents use social media as a tool to affirm their roles within their families and with their friends. Within their peer groups, adolescents feel an obligation to maintain connections by reacting to posts. These behaviors reveal the complexities of navigating relationships in both offline and online spaces.

Conflict Between the Desire for Social Belonging and Personal Values

Adolescents often experience a conflict between wanting to fit in and staying true to their personal values. Participants noted,

P1: "There are times when I join trends just to be part of the group, even if I don't really agree with them."

P8: "I don't like posting about every moment of my life, but my friends do, and sometimes I feel weird about not joining in."

Many events or trends arise on social media. The results showed that individuals participated in events in which they had no interest for the sake of conforming and being included. This tension between conformity and individuality underscored the challenges of social belonging. These experiences illustrated the struggle to balance personal authenticity with the need for acceptance within social groups. This shows how social media and FOMO can lead adolescents to prioritize social validation over personal happiness and preferences.

Experiences of Prioritizing Visibility as a Source of Personal Fulfillment

The need to be seen and acknowledged was a recurring theme in participants' narratives; they said,

P1: "I feel good when people notice my posts, like when they say I look nice or that they're proud of me."

P1: "Sometimes I post things even when I don't feel like it, just so people don't forget about me."

This showed that constant validation seeking through social media and the pressure to maintain a certain image to avoid being left out. Online visibility was important to their sense of accomplishment or worth. Visibility on social media can serve as both a motivator and a source of pressure for adolescents: motivation to show they are achieving their goals, and pressure to maintain a certain image to conform and avoid being left out.

Perceived Role of Adolescents as Socially Adjusted Individuals

Adolescents viewed themselves as individuals who need to navigate social norms and expectations effectively. Respondents shared,

P3: "I feel like I'm supposed to always adapt to different groups, whether it's family or friends, so I don't upset anyone."

P3: "I try to be the person everyone expects me to be, but sometimes it's tiring."

Individuals curate themselves to provide a certain image on social media. This fake self-identity poses a significant challenge to mental health because of societal expectations and norms that they must uphold. It is hard to manage different expectations in a carefully curated manner–they may conform with one group, but look out of place in another. This adaptability requires adolescents to

put significant effort into maintaining harmony within their social circles. These statements show how adolescents strive to balance their own identities with their expected roles in different social contexts.

Self-Assurance Against FOMO

Participants shared varying degrees of self-assurance in resisting the effects of FOMO, stating

P2: "I've learned to focus on what I have instead of what others are doing. It's not easy, but it helps."

P3: "I try to ignore the feeling of missing out, but sometimes it gets to me, especially when I see my friends having fun without me".

Focusing on oneself instead of comparing oneself to other and feeling insecure about their accomplishments and life status on social media is one helpful approach. This demonstrates the development of self-control as adolescents mature. However, others admitted that self-assurance is still a work in progress. These responses highlighted the spectrum of experiences that adolescents have in managing their feelings of FOMO, from building resilience to continuing struggles. Interestingly, respondents who participated in extracurricular activities, pursued hobbies, or had diverse social circles reported experiencing less FOMO.

Practical Implications

This study's findings provide several important implications for practice, especially for educators, parents, and mental health professionals working with adolescents. Schools can involve social media literacy programs in their curricula to help students develop a healthier relationship with social media, understand its potential impact on mental health, and learn strategies to manage FOMO. Future research could examine the varying effects of different types of screen media use and whether families are involved in interventions enhances their effectiveness (Goldberg, 2024). Parents should be motivated to have open conversations with their children about use of social media, and help them set boundaries while understanding the differences between portrayals in cyberspace and reality.

Mental health professionals can use these insights to develop targeted interventions, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques, that can address the anxiety and stress related to FOMO. Guidance counselors should take an active role in implementing programs that focus on emotional resilience and coping skills to help adolescents manage peer pressure and FOMO. Social-emotional learning can support emotional regulation and improve self-esteem, reducing the negative impact of social media. Additionally, resilience programs help students develop adaptive coping strategies, fostering well-being and positive adaptation despite challenges (Ronen, 2021; Arslan, 2024). By providing adolescents with coping strategies and fostering environments that promote self-esteem and resilience, these stakeholders can play a crucial role in mitigating the adverse effects of FOMO and supporting the overall well-being of young people.

Conclusion

Overall, this study explored how Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) affected Filipino adolescents across personal, positional, and ideological categories. Results showed that adolescents linked their sense of self-worth to social media validation based on the number of likes and reactions to their posts. Over time, individuals gained self-awareness and separated their own self-value from societal norms and standards. Positional influences revealed the pressure to conform to societal standards and pressure from peer expectations, leading to fake online identities and curating online personas that fit societal standards and expectations so that they would feel a sense of belonging. This poses a significant challenge to the authenticity of individuals' self-identity. In the category of ideology, FOMO drives adolescents to prioritize visibility and digital presence, keeping up on social media and maintaining engagement with families and friends. These findings highlight the complex interplay of FOMO on adolescents' psychological, emotional, and social development.

This study highlights the need for interventions that will address the psychological and social impacts of FOMO among Filipino adolescents. Providing programs such as digital literacy, and

including it in the curriculum, can help adolescents and students understand the proper use of social media and build healthier habits with social media utilization. Additionally, establishing peer support groups can furnish a safe space for adolescents. The combined approach of digital literacy programs and peer support groups may help adolescents to better navigate social media and maintain overall well-being.

Limitations

A possible limitation of this study was that cultural differences may introduce variations in the experiences of FOMO among different populations.

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This research did not receive any specific grant or funding from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit funding agency. The study was conducted independently, with resources provided by the researchers.

Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare no conflict of interest in conducting this study. All efforts were made to ensure objectivity, transparency, and ethical standards throughout the research process.

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