

Affiliation Needs, Loneliness, and Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) in Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study explores the relationship between the need for affiliation, loneliness, and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among adolescents, a group particularly vulnerable to social anxiety due to their intensive use of social media. **Method:** Utilizing a quantitative approach, the research involved 349 adolescents selected through accidental sampling from a population of 1,996,825 in Sidoarjo. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression with the JASP version 17 software to assess the predictive roles of the need for affiliation and loneliness on FOMO. **Results:** The findings revealed a significant relationship between both the need for affiliation and loneliness with FOMO, with a *p*-value of 0.001, indicating that adolescents experiencing stronger desires for social connection and higher levels of loneliness are more likely to exhibit FOMO. **Novelty:** This study contributes to the limited body of research on FOMO in Indonesian adolescents by integrating psychosocial variables such as affiliation needs and loneliness, emphasizing the critical need for early interventions to manage digital-era social anxieties and promote healthier online engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The adolescent stage is a transition from the dependence of childhood to the responsibilities of adulthood. Santrock defines adolescence as ages 12-22 years [1]. Self-adjustment is a major challenge for adolescents. Adolescents must adjust to interactions with the opposite sex and people outside of family and school. In early and mid-adolescence, interactions with peers become more sophisticated, including opposite-sex affiliations. Adolescents seek emotional support in their groups. Upon success in social relationships, adolescents gain self-confidence, and group rejection is the worst punishment. Thus, every adolescent will want to fit in [2].

Adolescents use the internet extensively during times of rapid digital development (Pichler, 2021; Gentina, 2020). Teenagers often use the internet before going to bed and after waking up. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, LINE and others are used first. They monitor friends' status updates on social media to get the latest information. Stillman says teens today are worried about being overlooked and missing important news. FOMO is another phrase for this worry or fear [3].

Przybylski et al. define FOMO as anxiety caused by being left behind and missing important and meaningful opportunities that are being experienced by others [4]. People with this anxiety fear being overlooked because it is not their experience (Erik, 2023). FOMO can be caused by experiences or activities especially in the context of social

activities, questions about the right choice, and sadness for not being chosen. FOMO regret is different from decision regret. FOMO is regret when people feel like they made the right choice but feel like they missed something (Harianto, 2019).

According to Subagijo (2020) the characteristics of FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) are: 1. spending a lot of time in front of electronic devices, 2. fixated on social media and gossiping about others, 3. investing heavily in the latest trends, 4. accepting to follow something popular without hesitation 5. always looking for the latest news, 6. people always force themselves to do anything [5]. Przybylski claims that FOMO has two components: a lack of need for self and a lack of need for Relatedness. If not met, the desire to connect and integrate can trigger anxiety. The need for self has 2 concepts, namely autonomy and competence [6].

Masyitah, et al. (2022) classified "Description of Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) in Muslim Adolescents in Pekanbaru, Indonesia" as moderate (67.1%). The FOMO study from the Australian Psychological Society (APS) shows adolescents spend 2.7 hours a day. FOMO affects 50% of teenagers and 25% of adults. This study shows that teenagers are more prone to FOMO than adults [7].

Through excessive social media use, Setiadi & Agus (2020) say FOMO can trigger depression and low self-esteem. FOMO leads to poor life satisfaction, a tendency to use electronic devices while driving or walking, an inability to enjoy time with others, difficulty sleeping, and neglecting personal life, according to Abel. Sumini said symptoms of FOMO include feeling worried if you don't check social media, missing out on knowledge, fixating on other people's behavior, and not utilizing social media." [8]

In the initial survey, researchers gave a Google Form questionnaire to 30 Sidoarjo Regency teenagers and found that 12 people found it difficult to turn off social media, 15 people felt anxious when they did not know what their friends were doing, and 14 people felt anxious when they saw their friends playing social media without them, 24 people never missed hanging out with their friends, 17 teenagers felt anxious when they saw their friends playing social media without them, and 18 teenagers felt anxious when they saw their friends playing without them. The initial poll found that teenagers in Sidoarjo Regency experience FOMO. This is in line with Subagijo's FOMO characteristics.

Affiliation, or the need to be constantly connected and engaged, influences FOMO, according to Przybylski et al. An unfulfilled drive for connectedness can lead to fear or worry [6]. Adolescents who are less affected and always connected are likely to suffer from FOMO behaviors as they try to fulfill psychological needs, especially connectivity [9].

McClelland defines affiliation as the need for warmth and support in interpersonal interactions, which drives behavior to connect with others. McClelland says affiliation requires kindness, forming warm relationships, and maintaining them. (Indi, 2019) [4]. McClelland outlines six aspects of the need for affiliation: the desire to be with others, to be regularly involved, to be liked and accepted, to please others, to be loyal to friends, and to seek acceptance [10].

Hariato (2019) claimed that FOMO and affinity are directly and indirectly related [11]. Therefore, social media mediates the need for affiliation and FOMO. This is in accordance with "The Relationship Between the Need for Affiliation and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in Students Who Use Instagram Social Media" by Lutfi et al. (2021). Students who use Instagram have a high correlation between affiliation and FOMO. If Instagram users have higher affiliation requirements, they will have higher FOMO.

In addition to affiliation, loneliness is one of the factors that influence FOMO, according to Virnanda (2020). Lonely people need social connections [12]. Russell said individuals who are unable to relate to others will feel lonely [12]. Peplau and Perlman define loneliness as a mismatch between relationship goals and the social environment. Like all living things, humans need alone time and connection. Unsatisfying relationships and limited interpersonal connections can lead to subjective feelings. The sense of a gap between desired and real social interactions leads to loneliness [13]. Feeling unwanted, alienated, and powerless in their environment increases the risk of loneliness in adolescents. Without attention, affection, or love from parents, an individual or adolescent can feel lonely [14]. The R-UCLA Loneliness Scale from Russell, et al. measures social desirability, loneliness, and depression [15].

Research by Nailis and Wikan (2023) on "The Relationship between Loneliness and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) Behavior in Tulungagung 1 State High School Students" found a positive correlation between these variables. This unhappiness can make teenagers afraid of losing information and social connections. They will use social media to avoid feeling lonely or ignored. Whiteman claims that social media is utilized to share, learn, and express public feelings.

The drive for affiliation, loneliness, and FOMO have been studied. Masyitah, et al. (2022) examined "a description of FOMO in Muslim adolescents in Pekanbaru, Indonesia" and Lutfi et al. (2021) examined "the relationship between the need to affiliate and FOMO in students who use Instagram social media". Nailis and Wikan (2023) examined "The Relationship between Loneliness and Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) Behavior in Tulungagung 1 State High School Students" but did not examine the relationship between affiliation needs and loneliness to adolescent FOMO behavior [16]. Therefore, researchers are interested in exploring further and the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the need for affiliation and loneliness to FOMO behavior in adolescents.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is quantitative and correlational. The study involved 1,996,825 Sidoarjo Regency adolescents aged 12-22 years from the statistics agency. In a previous study, 22.5% of Sidoarjo Regency adolescents experienced FOMO, with TikTok social media influencing 10.5% and other reasons unknown [17]. Isaac and Michael's table reports 349 research samples with a 5% error rate. This study used incidental sampling. Incidental sampling is random sampling of eligible applicants. Data was collected using a Likert

scale with Strongly Corresponding (SS), Disagreeing (TS), Corresponding (S), and Strongly Disagreeing (STS). FOMO measures unmet psychological needs for relatedness and self, according to Przybylski et al. (2013). From Se'u and Yoshinta (2022), 9 items with a reliability of 0.89 were used to measure. The 2022 Loneliness Instrument combines Namira's adopted scale with 26 Rusell-described loneliness statements. The loneliness scale has a reliability of 0.96 and evaluates social conformity, personality, and sadness. Laila's (2014) affiliation requirements scale consisting of 40 items, based on McClelland's (1987) Affiliation Needs theory, has a reliability value of 0.911.

This study uses multiple regression because two or more independent factors affect the dependent variable. Multiple regression was used to determine whether affiliation affects loneliness due to FOMO. The initial multiple regression analysis began with an assumption test. Classical assumption tests include normality, linearity, and multicollinearity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Traditional assumption tests were initially conducted in this study using normality, linearity, and multicollinearity tests. The data will be analyzed using the following tests after the standard assumption tests. Wibowo (2024) defines a normal distribution as a symmetrical, bell-shaped distribution of continuous random data with the highest frequency or mean in the center. The normality test reveals that the data is regularly distributed, resulting in a bell-shaped curve in the figure. The data can be seen in figure 1.

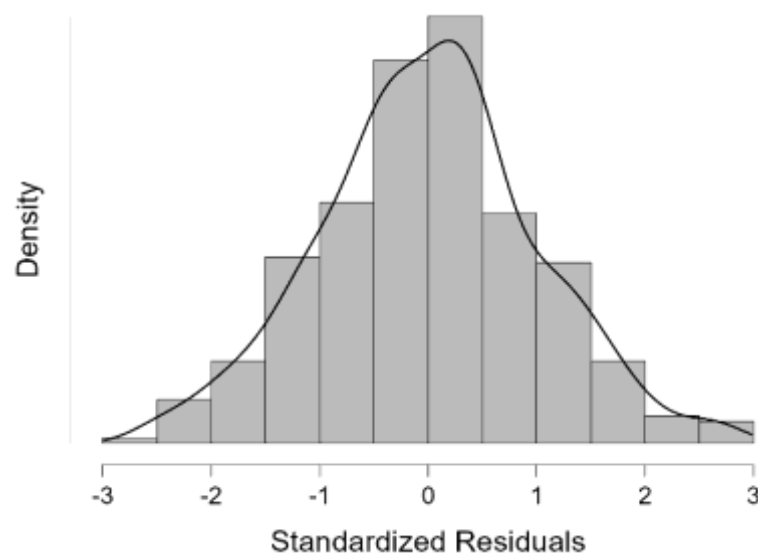


Figure 1. normality test

Table 1. Multicollinearity Test.

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p	Collinearity Statistics	
							Tolerance	VIF
M ₀	(Intercept)	21.754	0.186		116.996	< .001		
M ₁	(Intercept)	0.818	3.007		0.272	0.786		
	X1	0.062	0.024	0.140	2.631	0.009	0.888	1.126
	X2	0.168	0.030	0.295	5.550	< .001	0.888	1.126

According to Priyatno (2014: 103) If the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) value is < 10 and Tolerance > 0.1, it means there is no multicollinearity problem. Based on the Collinearity Statistic results, it is found that VIF is 1.126 which is less than 10 which indicates the absence of multicollinearity. The data can be seen in table 1.

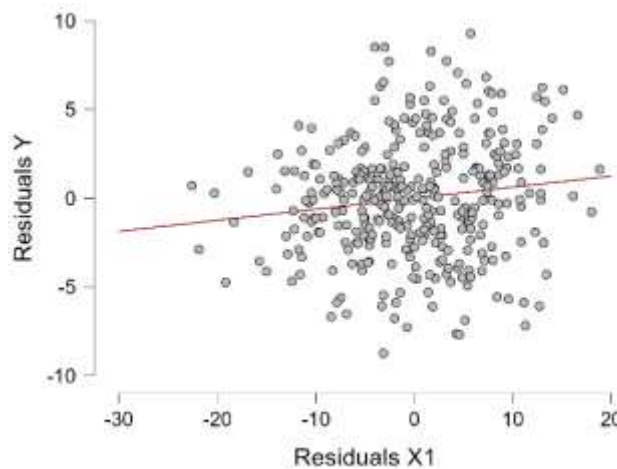


Figure 2. Linearity Test of Affiliation Needs and Fear Of Missing Out.

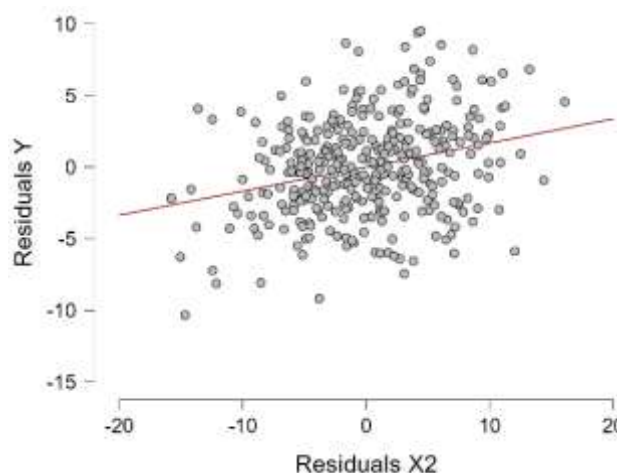


Figure 3. Linearity Test of Loneliness and Fear Of Missing Out

Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) variables, the results show that the data is linear as well as the Loneliness and Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) variables. The data can be seen in figures 3 and 4.

Table 2. Hypothesis Test*Model Summary - Y* ▼

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE
M ₀	0.000	0.000	0.000	3.474
M ₁	0.366	0.134	0.129	3.242

Note. M₁ includes X1, X2

Data analysis resulted in R 0.366 and R² 0.134. This indicates an effective explanatory variation or contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable. The drive for affiliation and loneliness explained 13.4% of FOMO, along with additional reasons that have not been examined. The data can be seen in table 2.

Table 3. Anova.*ANOVA* ▼

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
M ₁	Regression	562.038	2	281.019	26.736	< .001
	Residual	3636.770	346	10.511		
	Total	4198.808	348			

Note. M₁ includes X1, X2

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

Based on data analysis, F is obtained as much as 26,736 and P < 0.001 where this can be said to be significant, which means that the need for affiliation and loneliness can predict fear of missing out (FOMO). Data can be seen in table 3.

Discussion

This study correlates loneliness, desire for affiliation, and FOMO. R 0.366 and R² 0.134 indicate the effective contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable. This indicates the explanatory variation or effective contribution of the independent variable to the dependent. In addition to other characteristics not studied in this study, 13.4% of FOMO is explained by the need for affiliation and loneliness.

Rinjani & Firmanto say one of the basic human needs is the urge to affiliate, or close relationships with others. Maslow's needs theory explains social needs, such as the need for relationships. One type of social interaction is wanting to know what friends, family, and even strangers are doing. In such situations, a person will feel the need to constantly engage in the activities and lives of others, including friends, family, and even strangers [18]. Someone who is afraid of losing the opportunity to join their social environment will feel anxious and this is what can trigger fomo. During adolescence, individuals need affiliation or relationships with other people, one of the means used in

this case is social media, where individuals can establish relationships with other individuals (Hasanah, 2021) [19]. This need encourages adolescents to connect and form connections, thus making them afraid of loss. Teenagers utilize social media to follow their surroundings because of FOMO [20]. The need for attachment represents people who have experienced the fear of abandonment and the urge to belong to a group, according to Shodiq, et al. (2020) [21]. In line with Sette et al. (2019), who found that people bond more with others and assessed the basic human need to establish and maintain solid connections. The study found that adolescents with a strong need for affiliation were more likely to experience FOMO. When their friends post fun events on social media, they feel obligated to join in so as not to feel left out. This cycle reinforces the fear of missing out on social experiences by requiring social interaction.

According to Aderson, loneliness is a negative emotion that can cause anxiety, hopelessness, depression, unhappiness with the future, and self-blame if felt continuously. Thus, adolescents will feel alienated, nervous, and afraid if they are left behind in information, which leads to Fear Of Missing Out behavior, diverting their social interactions to social media to avoid feeling ignored by the surrounding environment [22]. Russell (Mahanani, 2025) defines that loneliness is a condition or feeling experienced by individuals caused by certain personalities within the individual himself, this can occur because individuals who experience loneliness cannot get the social life they want, and individuals who experience loneliness will usually have feelings of sadness, lack of enthusiasm, moodiness and individuals will feel themselves worthless [23]. Individuals who feel lonely tend to seek online interactions to reduce feelings of social isolation, which can increase the experience of Fear Missing Out (FOMO). When an individual feels alienated, they may be more likely to feel fear of missing out on valuable social experiences, thus amplifying their feelings of Fear Missing Out (FOMO). In addition, loneliness can amplify social comparison, which also contributes to increased Fear Missing Out (FOMO) [24]. When individuals compare themselves to others and feel lacking, this can trigger feelings of fear of missing out on important moments experienced by others. This is in accordance with Fenia and Nastasia's research (2022) The results show that there is a positive correlation between loneliness and fear of missing out on SMA Pertiwi 1 Padang City students. The more lonely, the greater the fear of missing out. Teenagers who feel lonely tend to be more active on social media as a way to cope with feelings of isolation and seek connections with others. However, excessive use of social media can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and increase Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) [25]. In addition, the results of study by Arizka, et al (2024) showed a significant relationship between loneliness and Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) among teenage K-pop fans. The study showed that adolescents who experience higher levels of loneliness tend to have higher levels of FoMO. This can be explained by unmet social needs, which are often exacerbated by excessive social media use. Social media, although it can fulfill some social needs, can also create feelings of loss and dissatisfaction when adolescents see the activities of their friends that seem more interesting [26]. This is also in accordance with

research by Piko, et al (2025) showing that loneliness serves as a mediator in the relationship between social comparison and Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO). That is, social comparison can reinforce feelings of loneliness, which in turn can contribute to the experience of Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO). The two are interrelated negative social emotions, where loneliness can increase feelings of fear of missing out on valuable social experiences[24].

Data analysis resulted in R 0.366 and R² 0.134. This indicates an effective explanatory variation or contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable. The variation of desire for affiliation and FOMO related to loneliness is 13.4%. According to various studies, age factors (Tomczyk & Selmanagic-Lizde), communication factors between parents and children (Alt & Boniel-Nissim), factors of self-esteem, social interaction, and social anxiety (Abel et al.), and psychological well-being (higher stress, anxiety, and depression, especially in those who feel pressured to continue) also affect FOMO [27].

This study has significant shortcomings. The small sample size hinders generalization. This study used a questionnaire-based survey, which is prone to response bias. To better understand the relationship between Affiliation Needs, Loneliness, and FOMO, future research could include interviews or observations. Lastly, this study did not account for personality or social support, which may affect the relationship between loneliness and FOMO.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The study found that both the need for affiliation and loneliness significantly contribute to the emergence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in adolescents, with a p-value < 0.001 and a combined explanatory power of 13.4% (R = 0.366; R² = 0.134), indicating that these psychosocial factors partially account for adolescents' susceptibility to FOMO. **Implication :** These findings highlight the importance of fostering emotionally supportive peer relationships and reducing feelings of isolation as key strategies in mitigating FOMO-related anxiety among adolescents in the digital age. **Limitation :** However, the study's limited scope—both in terms of explanatory variables and focus on adolescent participants—restricts the generalizability of the results across broader populations and contextual factors. **Future Research :** Future studies should consider incorporating additional psychological constructs such as self-esteem, psychological well-being, self-control, and internet addiction, and expand the demographic scope to include late childhood and adult populations to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the antecedents and impact of FOMO across developmental stages.

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