



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**EXPLORING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING THE FEAR OF MISSING OUT
(FOMO) AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SARAWAK**

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Exploring The Role Of Social Media In Shaping The Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) Among Undergraduate Students In Sarawak

Abstract

The pervasive nature of social media has positioned it as a significant factor in the psychological well-being of university students, particularly concerning the rise of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). This qualitative study aimed to explore the role of social media in shaping FOMO among female undergraduate students at UNIMAS, understand its influence on their emotional well-being, and construct the coping mechanisms they employ. Adopting a phenomenological approach, this research conducted pre-screening, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and collected reflective journals from six purposively selected female students from psychology and counseling programs. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that excessive engagement with visually-centric platforms like TikTok and Instagram contributes significantly to FOMO, driven by habitual use and compulsive platform switching. Upward social comparison was a primary trigger, leading to negative self-evaluation in areas of life progress, academic performance, and lifestyle, which in turn evoked emotional distress, including sadness, anger, and insecurity. Despite their academic training, the participants were not immune to FOMO; however, they employed various coping strategies such as developing self-awareness and acceptance, seeking support through venting, and using distraction through alternative activities like cooking and creative hobbies. This study contributes to the limited research on FOMO in a Malaysian context, highlighting the need for targeted digital well-being initiatives within university settings. It underscores the importance of fostering self-regulation and critical media literacy to mitigate the negative emotional consequences of FOMO.

Keywords: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Social Media, Social Comparison, Emotional Well-being, Coping Mechanisms, Undergraduate Students, Qualitative Research

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CHAPTER 1

1.0 Introduction

This chapter will provide an in-depth review of the research foundation by presenting the background study, which establishes the context and significance of the topic. It identifies the problem statement to justify the study and addresses the research objectives and questions that guide the investigation. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks are outlined to support the research approach, followed by the definition of key terms for clarity. Additionally, the significance and limitations of the study are discussed to highlight its contributions and scope. This chapter serves as the groundwork for understanding and conducting this Final Year Project research.

1.1 Background of the study

Social media has transformed how people interact, communicate, and share information, making it one of the most influential innovations of the 21st century. As of October 2024, social media is used by 5.22 billion people worldwide, or 63.8 percent of the total population (Petrosyan, 2024). Social media continues to be a dominant force in shaping global communication, culture, and connectivity. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and emerging AI-driven networks have become integral to daily life, influencing everything from social interactions to political discourse. According to 2024 social media usage data, 28.68 million Malaysians, or 83.1% of the nation's total population, have a social media account. (Howe, 2024). As social media evolves, it holds a dual role, acting as both a tool for community building and a catalyst for critical challenges in today's digital society.

As mentioned before, AI and machine learning algorithms have made social media more personalized than ever, curating content to suit individual preferences and behaviors. The highly curated nature of social media content often creates unrealistic standards of success, beauty, and happiness. This "highlight reel" effect has led to increased rates of social comparison, which studies link to mental health issues like anxiety, depression, sense of inadequacy among users,

and last but not least, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). As a result, social media can lead to feelings of exclusion and dissatisfaction, especially among young adults who are highly active online.

The term of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) was initially introduced by Dr. Dan Herman in 1996 as part of his marketing research, which explored consumer behavior and decision-making processes. The term gained broader recognition in 2004 when Patrick J. McGinnis popularized it in an article for *The Harbus*, Harvard Business School's magazine, titled *McGinnis' Two FOs: Social Theory at HBS*. Among the most influential figures in FOMO research is Andrew K. Przybylski, a psychologist at the University of Oxford. Przybylski's seminal 2013 study, co-authored with Kou Murayama, is widely regarded as the cornerstone of academic inquiry into FOMO. Their research, titled *Motivational, Emotional, and Behavioral Correlates of Fear of Missing Out*, laid the groundwork for subsequent studies, particularly through the development of the first Fear of Missing Out Scale (FOMOs). A key finding from the study highlighted FOMO as a notable psychological phenomenon, strongly associated with the growing prevalence of social media.

FOMO, defined as a pervasive fear that others are having rewarding experiences while one is missing out, is characterised by a desire to keep constantly connected to what others are doing (Przybylski et al., 2013). Fear of Missing Out is the fear that people have when they are faced with the possibility of missing out on a social occasion, new experience, profitable investment, or other pleasurable event. The urge to constantly be aware of what other people are doing, to feel as though you are "in touch" or in the know, stems from this fear of potential regret. FoMO is made up of two processes: the perception of missing out, followed by compulsive behaviour to retain these social ties (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). This phenomenon is typically intensified by the use of social media, where individuals have immediate access to updates about others' activities, creating a sense of missed opportunities (Alt, 2015).

Durkee et al. (2012) argue that people are not addicted to the technology itself, but rather to the specific social activities they perform on it. For example, interactive online activities, such as gaming, chatting, and social networking, ensure that someone stays online longer than they had anticipated which increases the risk of addiction. For instance, when the device battery runs

out, a person might go as far as to continue being online on other devices such as tablets, laptops, and other phones. Now with the help of social media platforms, people can stay online and connected constantly checking out other people's lives in order to see what others are doing and to be sure they are not missing out on something, or else they might feel a deep sense of regret, exclusion, and loneliness.

Individuals who choose to stay at home over going out with friends might encounter an initial fearful reaction to perceived social exclusion through not being part of a social activity and therefore through socially excluding themselves. Consequently, individuals might then experience lingering anxiety by imagining that others might have more fun or are more included than themselves. They may worry about losing their social standing by not being part of the group, feel uneasy about possibly not having a good time, and apprehend that their lives are less joyful and exciting than their friends' lives. Social media platforms may have a particularly significant role in fostering FoMO. Features like Instagram Stories, Facebook live updates, and TikTok's real-time content create a sense of urgency. These features amplify the anxiety by providing a fleeting glimpse into others' lives, making users feel as if they need to stay constantly connected to avoid missing out.

1.2 Problem Statement

Social media has evolved from a tool for connection to a potential source of psychological stress for undergraduate students, who use these platforms frequently. One pervasive issue associated with social media usage is the phenomenon known as the *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO). Fear of missing out is a relatively new construct that needs the attention of the clinical community due to its diagnostic implications in treatment processes (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). It is associated with problematic social media usage and can be experienced as a range of negative emotions and feelings related to the need to belong. Given the critical developmental stage of young adults, online social rejection triggers a response with higher emotional intensity. Some young adults may feel pressured to attend events or participate in social activities primarily to avoid missing out, rather than out of genuine interest.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has become a pervasive issue that significantly affects the emotional well-being of individuals, particularly among university students who are highly active on social media. FOMO is often characterized by feelings of anxiety, inadequacy, and even envy when individuals perceive that others are experiencing rewarding activities from which they are excluded (Yin et al., 2021). Research indicates that FOMO can lead to emotional distress as individuals constantly monitor social media to stay updated, often feeling dissatisfied or frustrated when comparing themselves to the idealized portrayals of others' lives (Zhang et al., 2021). This cycle of comparison and perceived exclusion can exacerbate feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and low self-worth, negatively impacting emotional well-being over time.

While FOMO's impact on mental health is well-documented, research on effective coping strategies remains limited, especially in the Malaysian setting. Coping strategies effective in one cultural setting may not be directly applicable or effective in another due to differences in social norms, values, and support systems. Littman & Russo (2024) suggest that future studies could explore how coping mechanisms for FoMO might vary across different cultural and demographic groups, offering a broader and more inclusive understanding of this phenomenon. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend and create useful coping mechanisms to deal with FOMO and its negative effects on emotional well-being. The current study attempts to fill this knowledge gap by identifying and investigating coping strategies individuals might use to lessen the adverse impacts of FOMO on their emotional well-being.

There is, however, a scarcity of research focussing solely on undergraduate psychology and counselling students. Counseling and psychology students, despite being trained in understanding and managing psychological phenomena, are not immune to the effects of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Their academic background equips them with knowledge about emotional regulation, coping strategies, and the psychological impact of social media. However, this awareness does not necessarily shield them from experiencing FOMO firsthand. In fact, their constant exposure to discussions about mental health and well-being may heighten their sensitivity to such experiences, making them even more vulnerable to the negative emotional effects associated with FOMO. Comprehending the ways in which FoMO presents itself in this

group is essential since it could affect their overall health and, consequently, their career advancement and future work.

Thus, this study aims to explore the role that social media platforms play in shaping FOMO among female undergraduate students at UNIMAS. By examining students' personal experiences and perspectives, this research seeks to understand how the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) influence emotional well-being and ways to cope with it.

1.3 Research Objectives & Questions

1.3.1 Research Objectives

1.3.1.1 To explore the role of Social Media Platforms in shaping the Fear of Missing Out among female undergraduate students in UNIMAS

1.3.1.2 To understand the influence that Fear of Missing Out has on an individual's emotional well-being

1.3.1.3 To construct the coping mechanisms for handling Fear of Missing Out

1.3.2 Research Questions

1.3.2.1 Does social media play an important role in shaping the Fear of Missing Out among female undergraduate students in UNIMAS?

1.3.2.2 To what extent does Fear of Missing Out influence a person's emotional well-being?

1.3.2.3 What are the coping mechanisms for handling Fear of Missing Out?

1.4 Conceptual Framework

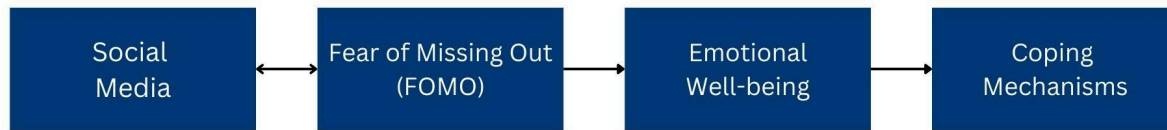


Figure 1.1

Figure 1 of the framework illustrates the relationships between social media usage, the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), emotional well-being, and coping mechanisms. Social media usage is linked to the development or intensification of FOMO. This connection suggests that frequent or prolonged engagement with social media may lead individuals to experience FOMO. Social media platforms often present a constant stream of updates about others' activities, achievements, and social interactions, which can trigger a fear of missing out on these experiences. This aligns with the idea that seeing others' posts and activities on social media may create a sense of missing out, as people are constantly exposed to curated experiences of others. FOMO is shown as a central mediator between social media use and its effects. FOMO here acts as the linking factor that translates social media exposure into personal and social outcomes.

Once FOMO is triggered, it may affect emotional well-being, potentially in a negative way. A heightened FOMO could negatively influence well-being, potentially leading to feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, or anxiety due to constant exposure and comparisons with others' experiences. To address the detrimental effects of FOMO on emotional well-being, coping mechanisms become crucial. Coping strategies help individuals reduce their susceptibility to FOMO and its negative emotional effects. Effective coping mechanisms improve emotional resilience and empower individuals to navigate their digital and social environments more positively. In summary, the framework highlights a causal flow of how social media contributes

to FOMO, which negatively influences emotional well-being. Coping mechanisms are introduced as a vital element to mitigate these impacts and promote emotional stability.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

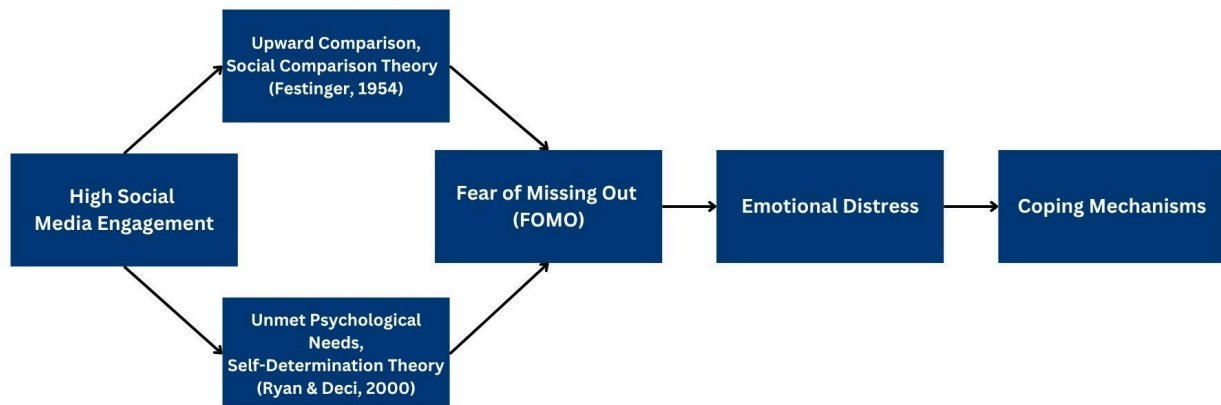


Figure 1.2

This theoretical framework explores the connection between social media engagement and the development of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), grounded in Social Comparison Theory (SCT) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The framework suggests that engaging with social media can trigger psychological processes that foster FOMO. From a Social Comparison Theory perspective proposed by Leon Festinger in 1954, individuals frequently compare their lives to the curated and idealized representations they encounter on social media. This comparison can lead to feelings of inadequacy or exclusion, as people perceive others as having more fulfilling experiences. Simultaneously, the framework incorporates Self-Determination Theory developed by Ryan and Deci (2000), which emphasizes the role of unmet psychological needs in contributing to feelings of disconnection and longing. When individuals' psychological needs are not satisfied, (in this case, relatedness) they may turn to social media in search of validation or connection, inadvertently amplifying their sense of missing out.

At the core of the framework is FOMO, which arises as a result of persistent social comparison and unmet psychological needs. FOMO manifests as anxiety or discomfort stemming from the belief that others are engaging in rewarding activities without the individual's participation. This experience can lead to significant emotional distress, potentially affecting a person's mental health and overall well-being. However, the framework also acknowledges the potential for coping mechanisms to mitigate these negative effects. Individuals experiencing emotional distress from FOMO may develop coping strategies, such as reducing social media usage, focusing on offline activities, or engaging in mindfulness practices. By addressing the emotional repercussions of FOMO and identifying coping mechanisms, the framework provides a comprehensive view of the psychological role social media engagement has on the fear of missing out (FOMO).

1.6 Definition of Terms

1.6.1 Social Media

Conceptual Definition

Definitions of social media have been offered from beyond communication science. Some extant definitions are relatively simple, focusing on the nature of message construction in social media. Kent (2010) broadly defined social media as “any interactive communication channel that allows for two-way interaction and feedback,”. Meanwhile, Russo et al., (2008) defined social media as “those that facilitate online communication, networking, and/or collaboration”. However, a study was conducted by Carr and Hayes (2015) to come up with a new, broad yet precise, and atemporal definition of social media. According to their research, social media are Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others.

Operational Definition

Social media refers to online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, and TikTok that are frequently used by female undergraduate students at UNIMAS to interact, share content, and stay informed about their peers' activities.

1.6.2 Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Conceptual Definition

Defined as a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, FoMO is characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing (Przybylski et al., 2013). In addition, Abel et al., (2016) describe FOMO as a psychological state characterized by the fear of being left out of rewarding experiences, which can lead individuals to prioritize staying connected online, even if it disrupts other areas of life.

Operational Definition

Individuals' expressed feelings of anxiety, unease, or compulsion to remain continuously connected to social media platforms, as well as their behaviors and decisions influenced by the perception of being excluded from social interactions or rewarding experiences shared online. Measured using the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FOMOs).

1.6.3 Emotional Wellbeing

Conceptual Definition

Diener et al. (1999) describe emotional well-being as part of "subjective well-being," characterized by frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect, and a general sense of satisfaction with life. This aspect of well-being relates to an individual's ability to cope with life's challenges, regulate emotions effectively, and maintain a generally positive outlook. Ryff and Keyes (1995) add that emotional well-being includes not only the presence of positive emotions but also a sense of purpose and self-acceptance, which contribute to a stable and enduring state of happiness.

Operational Definition

Emotional well-being refers to the participants' self-reported experiences of positive and negative emotions, life satisfaction, and their ability to cope with challenges associated with FOMO, as revealed through semi-structured interviews.

1.6.4 Coping Mechanism

Conceptual Definition

According to Rohmah et al., (2024), coping mechanisms are strategies or actions people take to deal with difficult situations that challenge or beyond their psychological and behavioural capacities, as well as to adapt, tolerate, accept, and overcome changes in their lives. Three strategies exist for exercising the protective function of coping behaviour, removing or changing the circumstances that lead to problems, perceptually regulating the meaning of experiences in a way that counteracts their problematic nature, and limiting the emotional fallout from problems to a manageable level (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

Operational Definition

Coping mechanisms are the conscious or unconscious practices adopted by undergraduate female students to manage FOMO and the negative emotions and anxieties associated with it, which will be gained through the interviews.

1.7 Significance of study

Studying the role of social media in shaping the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among female undergraduate FCSHD students at UNIMAS is of considerable significance, especially at a time when digital interaction heavily influences student life and well-being. Firstly, this research contributes specifically to the existing literature on FOMO within Malaysian university context, addressing a gap by focusing on FCSHD students. While most studies on FOMO investigate broader populations or general age groups, examining FOMO among UNIMAS students offers university-specific insights that may highlight unique social and academic pressures tied to student life. Identifying how FOMO manifests among this specific student body

can help contextualize FOMO's triggers and influence within a university setting, enriching our understanding of the phenomenon and its variability across different environments (Buglass et al., 2017).

Furthermore, exploring the emotional effect of FOMO provides a deeper understanding of how this phenomenon affects students' overall well-being. Persistent feelings of being left out or missing important experiences can contribute to stress, anxiety, and even depressive symptoms, which in turn may hinder academic performance and social relationships. By identifying these emotional repercussions, the study emphasizes the importance of addressing FOMO as part of broader mental health initiatives. This insight can be informed to university counseling services, enabling them to develop targeted interventions and workshops aimed at reducing the negative psychological effects associated with FOMO. It can also contribute to initiatives aimed at increasing inclusivity and fostering a campus culture that promotes both engagement and psychological well-being (Beyens et al., 2016). Addressing this issue is vital for fostering a more supportive and mentally healthy campus environment.

In addition to uncovering the problem, this study seeks to identify practical coping mechanisms that students can use to manage FOMO. By collecting data on strategies that students currently employ or find effective, the research can provide a comprehensive overview of coping practices that mitigate the emotional toll of FOMO. These mechanisms may include digital detox strategies, mindfulness practices, or fostering stronger offline connections. Implementing these coping mechanisms into student wellness programs could play a significant role in improving digital well-being and encouraging healthier social media habits (Roberts & David, 2020). This approach not only addresses immediate concerns but also equips students with long-term skills to manage digital stressors.

1.8 Summary

This chapter highlights the importance of studying how social media influences FOMO, its influence on emotional well-being among, and possible coping mechanisms among undergraduate female FCSHD students in UNIMAS, aiming to address gaps in understanding this growing issue. Due to the fact that this topic is currently lacking in the Malaysian social

environment, this study is necessary since it can provide insights for aspiring counsellors, counselling instructors, and researchers.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of relevant literature to establish the foundation for this study, which explores the role of social media platforms in shaping the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among young adults, its subsequent effects on well-being, as well as ways to cope with it. The chapter begins by examining the related theories and concepts underpinning social media, FOMO, and well-being. It then delves into past research on social media usage patterns, highlighting the dual nature of these platforms as both facilitators and barriers to Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). The review also explores how the phenomenon of FOMO influence emotional outcomes. Finally, the chapter identifies gaps in the existing literature, emphasizing the need for further exploration into the interplay between social media, FOMO, well-being, and coping mechanisms within the context of young adults in a Malaysian university setting. By synthesizing previous findings, this chapter aims to provide critical insights and contextualize the significance of this research.

2.1. Related Theories

2.1.1 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

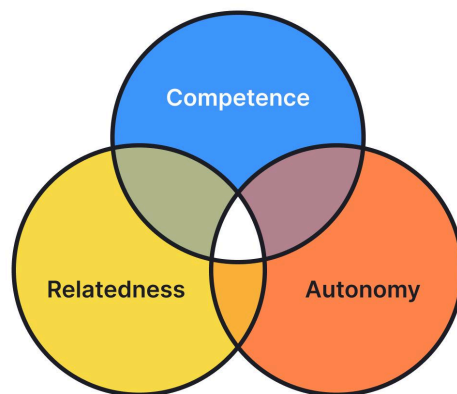


Figure 2.1

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a comprehensive framework for understanding human motivation, well-being, and behavior. Self Determination Theory offers a blueprint for understanding the motivational basis of personality and social behavior and the relation of basic psychological needs to well-being, psychological flourishing, and high quality of life. Developed by Ryan and Deci, SDT emphasizes the satisfaction of three innate psychological needs, autonomy (the need to feel volitional and self-directed), competence (the need to feel effective in one's interactions with the environment), and relatedness (the need to feel connected to others), are essential for optimal functioning and psychological growth. These needs are universal and must be fulfilled across cultural and developmental contexts to support well-being and prevent maladaptive outcomes.

SDT distinguishes between autonomous motivation, which arises from intrinsic interest or the integration of external values into one's self-concept, and controlled motivation, which stems from external pressures or contingent rewards. Autonomous motivation has been consistently linked to higher engagement, creativity, performance, and well-being, whereas controlled motivation often leads to lower satisfaction and increased stress. For example, environments that support autonomy, such as providing choices and acknowledging personal perspectives, tend to enhance intrinsic motivation, while controlling environments, like those relying on rewards or punishments, can undermine it (Deci et al., 1999).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the mechanisms underlying the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO can be viewed as a psychological response to the frustration or thwarting of basic psychological need, to be precise relatedness. FOMO is fundamentally tied to the need for connection and belonging. Social media platforms often present curated versions of others' lives, leading individuals to feel excluded from meaningful social experiences. When people perceive that others are participating in desirable activities while they are not, the unmet need for relatedness can trigger feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, and anxiety.

Przybylski et al. (2013), foundational study defined FOMO as "a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent" and linked it to deficits in need satisfaction. The study found that individuals with unmet needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness were more likely to experience FOMO, which led to problematic behaviors such as excessive social media use and reduced life satisfaction. Furthermore, Beyens et al. study in 2016 explored the role of social media in exacerbating FOMO and how it relates to need satisfaction. It found that frequent social media use heightened feelings of FOMO by amplifying perceptions of others' better social lives and experiences.

2.1.2 Social Comparison Theory

Social Comparison Theory, proposed by Leon Festinger in 1954, examines how individuals evaluate themselves through comparisons with others, particularly in uncertain situations (Suls & Wheeler, 2012). Festinger suggested that individuals have a fundamental need to assess their own opinions and abilities (1957). This drive leads them to seek out comparisons with others, particularly in situations where objective standards are unavailable. People tend to compare themselves with others who are similar to them in relevant ways. This similarity can be based on various factors, such as age, social status, or experience. The closer the comparison group, the more relevant the evaluation is perceived to be.

It identifies two main types of comparisons, upward (aspirational) and downward (self-enhancing) social comparison, both driven by motives like self-evaluation, self-enhancement, and self-improvement. Upward Social Comparison occurs when individuals compare themselves to others who they perceive as better off or more skilled. While this can motivate individuals to improve themselves, it can also lead to feelings of inadequacy and lower self-esteem if the gap seems too large. In contrast, Downward Social Comparison involves comparing oneself to others who are worse off. This type of comparison can enhance self-esteem and provide a sense of relief, especially in times of distress. Factors like personality traits, age, gender, and self-esteem influence comparison behavior, with notable effects on domains such as body image, social media habits, and health. Social comparisons are integral to understanding self-perception and shaping personal and social behaviors.

Social comparison is a key factor that mediates the relationship between FoMO and various negative outcomes, such as social media fatigue and addiction. Furthermore, social comparisons have been observed to be skewed toward upward comparisons in social networking sites (Tandon et al., 2024). Research indicates that increased engagement in social comparison on social media correlates with lower subjective well-being (SWB) and higher levels of anxiety and depression. A study by Steinberger and Kim in 2023 highlighted that individuals with lower subjective well-being were more likely to engage in social comparison, which subsequently heightened their fear of missing out (FOMO) and addiction to social networking sites (SNS). In retrospect, Social comparison theory is deeply intertwined with social media use, often leading to negative psychological outcomes due to frequent upward comparisons.

2.2 Past Previous Study

The phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has garnered significant attention in research due to its strong association with social media use and its impact on various aspects of life. Previous studies have indicated that social media platforms play a pivotal role in amplifying FOMO. Furthermore, FOMO is closely linked to emotional well-being, contributing to heightened levels of anxiety, loneliness, and even depression, particularly among young adults. This, in turn, resulted in people searching for ways to cope with the effects. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of FOMO and its pervasive influence on emotional health.

2.2.1 Social Media and Fear of Missing Out

A study conducted by Koo Kai Yan in 2023 aims to understand the relationship between social media usage and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among young Malaysian adults. The results of the study stated that there is a positive correlation between FOMO and the usage of social media. This shows when there is an increase in social media usage there will be an increase in FOMO. The same goes for young adults who experience higher levels of FOMO tend to use social media more intensively. The study highlights the rise of social media addiction, which is particularly prevalent among young adults. According to Tandon et al., (2021), Social media amplifies the fear of missing out (FOMO). The continuous updates that social media platforms offer about friends' events, activities, and experiences might intensify feelings of

FOMO. Users of social media frequently only stress the positive parts of their experiences, creating an idealized picture of life. FoMO may worsen as a result of upward comparisons, which make people feel as though their lives are less satisfying (Zhang et al., 2021). This is supported by Fioravanti et al., (2021). Their study of *Fear of missing out and social networking sites use and abuse* reveals a positive correlation between FoMO and social networking sites (SNS). Their finding also indicates amplification of FoMO by Social media.

Another study by Alutaybi et al., in 2019 aims to explore the relationship between social network site (SNS) design features and the experience of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). The study employed a multi-phase qualitative research methodology which is divided into three phases which are Introductory Interviews, diary study, and focus group sessions. The study highlights several social network site (SNS) features that contribute to the experience of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Presence features allow users to see when others are online, potentially triggering anxiety if they feel excluded from ongoing interactions. Impression features, such as visible likes and comments, can lead users to monitor their engagement levels, heightening concerns about being perceived as unpopular. Notifications and alerts prompt frequent account checks to avoid missing updates, while scarcity features, like time-limited posts, create urgency to engage before content disappears. Group features foster belonging but may also intensify FoMO if users feel less involved than others. Additionally, personalization algorithms heighten the fear of missing curated content, and tagging and mentions can pressure users to respond, increasing anxiety about social inclusion.

As explained by Zhang et al., (2021) in their study, different types of social media have different roles and influences on FOMO. Because of their emphasis on visually rich and curated material, image-centric social media platforms like Instagram are highly associated with increased levels of FoMO. These platforms prioritise sharing engaging photographs and videos that highlight idealised situations, frequently highlighting exclusive or aspirational experiences. The seeming liveliness of other people's lives and the visual immediacy can exacerbate users' sense of exclusion or loss of important activities. Conversely, text-based social media sites like Facebook and Twitter seem to have less of an affinity for FoMO, even though they still contribute to it. These sites mostly focus on updates and conversations, which could not arouse

the same degree of jealousy or emotional involvement as the vibrant, glitzy representations seen on image-centric platforms. As a result, the type and presentation of content on various social media platforms greatly affects the intensity of FoMO experienced by users.

2.2.2 Fear of Missing Out and its Relation to Emotional Well-being

Gugushvili et al. conducted a study in 2020 to explore the intriguing connections between fear of missing out (FoMO), problematic smartphone use (PSU), and emotional well-being. In a research titled *Two Dimensions of Problematic Smartphone Use Mediate the Relationship Between Fear of Missing Out and Emotional Well-Being*, the aim of the study was to investigate the mediating role of subdimensions of problematic smartphone use (PSU) in the relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and emotional well-being. The study established that higher levels of FoMO are associated with lower emotional well-being.

This finding suggests that individuals who experience a pervasive apprehension about missing out on rewarding experiences tend to report more negative emotional states, such as anxiety, depression, and overall dissatisfaction with life. This finding is supported by Wiesner (2017) in his research, claiming that mental exhaustion is also influenced by this phenomenon (FoMO), indicating that FoMO can lead to a state of emotional fatigue.

The research also identified that problematic smartphone use serves as a partial mediator in the relationship between FoMO and emotional well-being. This means that while FoMO directly affects emotional well-being, part of its impact is transmitted through engagement in problematic smartphone use. Individuals with high FoMO may engage more frequently with their smartphones, leading to excessive use that can detract from real-life interactions and contribute to feelings of isolation and distress.

While investigating the Links between Fear of Missing Out, Social Media Addiction, and Emotional Symptoms in Adolescence, Fabris et al., (2020) claim that Fear of missing out (FoMO) is associated with a decrease in emotional well-being in adolescents. The same goes for the research conducted by Çifçi and Kumcağız in 2023. Their study explores the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and Subjective Well-Being (SWB) in adolescents. As

indicated by their findings, the overall life satisfaction and subjective well-being of adolescents who experience FOMO are likely to decline as a result of feeling more negative and less positive emotions. This suggests that FoMO may result in heightened social comparison and loneliness, both of which have a detrimental impact on adolescents' subjective well-being.

In a different study, Stead and Bibby (2017) came to the same conclusions. According to their research, problematic internet usage and FOMO both have a detrimental effect on one's general subjective well-being. In particular, they showed a negative correlation with personal relationships and emotional well-being, but not with physical well-being. In 2021, Prabowo and Dewi found negative correlation between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and subjective well-being. It is said that People's general happiness and life satisfaction tend to decline as their levels of FOMO rise.

2.2.3 Coping Mechanisms for Fear of Missing Out

This theme synthesizes the current understanding of coping mechanisms employed by individuals to manage the fear of missing out. Given the adverse implications of the fear of missing out, researchers have dedicated considerable effort to exploring various strategies that individuals may utilize to mitigate its negative impacts. A study by Littman and Russo in 2024 aims to explore the lived experiences of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among emerging adults aged 20 to 30 years old and their coping strategies. Six primary coping mechanisms were found to be employed by individuals in the study to control their feelings of FOMO. In order to manage the psychological and emotional difficulties brought on by FOMO while preserving their well-being, the participants employed these few strategies.

One of the strategies is practicing mindfulness. Mindfulness techniques like meditation, grounding exercises, and conscious reflection helped participants stay in the now and deal with their feelings in a healthy way. Gottberg (2017) claimed that the best remedy to FOMO is to live a basic, essentialist, or minimalist lifestyle on purpose. People should just say 'stop' and live in the present moment (Beck, 2013). This practice fosters a deeper sense of control, contentment, and connection with the present moment. The effectiveness of mindfulness is further supported by Sofia et al., (2023) in their study. Their findings revealed that mindfulness therapy

dramatically reduced FoMO levels among Generation Z Instagram users. The interventions used in therapy sessions are designed to create a holistic approach to mindfulness, helping participants to develop skills that not only reduce FoMO but also enhance their overall mental health and emotional resilience.

According to Forward Pathway (2024), Digital detoxes are essential for managing FOMO as well. Digital detoxification is the intentional withdrawal from all smartphone activities for a set amount of time (Ansari et al., 2024). People can detach themselves from the never-ending stream of well chosen highlights from other people's life on social media by taking breaks from it, which might help them feel less than and excluded. Hunt et al., (2018) study finds that limiting social media usage had a significant positive impact on mental well-being. By limiting social media usage to around 30 minutes a day, the participants show significant decline in both fear of missing out and anxiety.

In addition to the previous strategies, one should develop a strong self-reliance. Self-Reliance as a coping strategy focuses on shifting attention from societal expectations and external validation to an individual's internal needs, values, and goals (Littman & Russo, 2024). This kind of self-alignment lessens the impact of FoMO by enabling individuals to turn down social gatherings or activities that conflict with their priorities. Another examples include muting notifications from group chats or straight away putting on phone 'Do Not Disturb' (DND) mode (Nguyen et al., 2024). These indicate that there is significant awareness and active management of digital media use among participants in the study.

2.3 Summary

This chapter reviews relevant literature on social media, FOMO, emotional well-being, and coping mechanisms. It examines existing studies to identify gaps, provides related theories, and establishes the foundation for understanding the relationships between these variables in the context of the research.

CHAPTER 3

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an explanation of the many approaches that are used to collect and analyse the data for this study. The methodologies included are research method, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, research approach, data analysis, and ethical consideration.

3.1 Research Method

Qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Meanwhile, Seers (2011) stated that qualitative research aims to answer questions about what something is like, what people think or feel about it, and why it has happened. It can also be defined as the study of the nature of phenomena and is particularly suitable for evaluating complicated multi-component treatments, emphasizing intervention enhancement, and providing answers to the questions of why something is (not) observed (Busetto et al., 2020).

This study adopts a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the role social media platforms play in shaping the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and its influence on emotional well-being, as well as the coping mechanism among female undergraduate students. Since FOMO and its effects are subjective experiences, a qualitative method allows for a detailed exploration of participants' personal perceptions, feelings, and behaviors that cannot be fully captured through numerical data. By focusing on a small, purposive sample, the study aims to uncover rich and nuanced insights into how FOMO manifests in daily life and affects emotional and social dynamics. This approach also enables the emergence of new themes and perspectives, which are essential for understanding the complexity of these issues in the context of young adults' lived experiences.

3.2 Population and Sample

Adolescents and young adults represent a unique population in terms of social media users, as they are the first generations to grow up in a highly digitized society (Shannon et al., 2022). While social media in digital platforms does help to promote social inclusion among adolescents and young adults, the risk associated with their excessive or problematic use cannot be overlooked (Daniels et al., 2021). Previous research conducted by Rozgonjuk et al., (2020) regarding Individual differences in Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), states that higher FoMO scores are associated with younger age. FoMO has been linked to younger age with small-to-medium-sized associations, and small effects in gender differences have been reported, with women scoring higher. On average, FOMO was just as high for adults as adolescents (Barry, 2021). According to audience report in 2018, female 16-24-year-olds are the largest group proportion of FOMO Networkers (17%), followed by male 16-24-year-olds (16%).

In the study that I will be conducting, my population is the female undergraduate students from Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development (FCSHD) of University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). This is because most of undergraduate the students in UNIMAS are young adults. Meanwhile, the sample is six female third-year Psychology and Counseling students. Morse (1995) suggests a minimum of six participants for phenomenological research, emphasising that this number can provide detailed insights into individuals' actual experiences. According to Guest et al., (2006) depending on the population's sample size, data saturation might be reached with as little as six interviews. Therefore, six participants are enough for this study.

The reasons for this specific group lies beneath. Stead and Bibby (2017) stated in their study that female participants scored significantly higher on the Problematic Internet usage (PIU) and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) scales than males. A study by Myers et al., (2003) found that counseling students generally reported greater wellness levels compared to the general population. Moreover, study by El-Ghoroury et al., (2012) imply that psychology students, due to their training and exposure to psychological concepts, may have a greater understanding of the importance of wellness strategies and coping mechanisms. This is mainly due to programs that often emphasize personal development and self-awareness, which can enhance students'

understanding of wellness. The counseling and psychology programs themselves include subjects such as helping skills, counseling theories, and personal growth, which may contribute to a greater awareness of wellness factors. By selecting counseling and psychology students as the target population, the study can investigate how individuals who are knowledgeable about mental health manage their own emotional struggles. This can provide deeper insights into the limitations of existing coping strategies, as well as the need for more tailored interventions that address the nuanced experiences of FOMO among future mental health professionals.

Purposive sampling was chosen as the sampling method for this study to ensure the selection of participants who are most relevant to the research objectives. Given the qualitative nature of the study, the focus is on obtaining in-depth insights rather than broad generalizations. This method allows the researcher to deliberately select participants who meet specific criteria, such as being third-year female undergraduate students aged 20-26 from counseling or psychology programs in the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development (FCSHD) at UNIMAS. These individuals are likely to provide deeper and more meaningful perspectives as they represent the demographic most impacted by these phenomena. Additionally, purposive sampling ensures that all participants are socially active and have a high level of FOMO. By targeting participants with relevant experiences, this method enhances the richness and relevance of the data collected.

3.3 Instrumentation

Przybylski et al., (2013) have developed an assessment to measure individual differences in the "Fear of Missing Out" (FoMO) construct. It was the first tool to operationalize this construct, making it foundational for studies investigating how FoMO impacts emotional, behavioral, and motivational aspects of individuals' lives. Specifically, it aims to quantify the levels of FoMO among individuals, categorizing them into low, moderate, and high levels of this phenomenon. Its sensitivity adds to its reliability by allowing it to monitor FoMO consistently across various populations and situations. A thorough investigation was conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the Fear of Missing Out scale (FoMOs). To make sure the test measures what it is supposed to measure, the authors used latent trait theory analysis to choose items that best reflect the FoMO concept. Since its creation, the scale has been used in a variety

of settings, such as evaluating social media usage, well-being, and demographic differences associated with FOMO. The scale is the most suitable to be used in the study, as it not only categorized individuals into the level of FOMO but also dig deeper into a variety of settings and areas.

3.4 Data Collection

In this study, data will be collected using three methods which are pre-screening, interview, and reflective journal.

3.4.1 Pre-screening

A Google form will be formed with questions taken from the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FOMOs). It includes 10 sample statements. For each statement, participants will indicate how true it is for them using the following five-point Likert-type scale:

- 1 = "Not at all true of me"
- 2 = "Slightly true of me"
- 3 = "Moderately true of me"
- 4 = "Very true of me"
- 5 = "Extremely true of me"

Meanwhile, some of the questions in the FOMOs include:

- "I fear others have more rewarding experiences than me..."
- "I get anxious when I don't know what my friends are up to..."
- "It bothers me when I miss an opportunity to meet up with friends..."

The Google form link will then be spread among undergraduate third-year female Psychology and Counseling students from the Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development (FCSHD). The inclusive criteria include being a female aged from 20-26 years old.

To calculate the score for the Fear of Missing Out scale (FoMOs), participants first complete the scale by responding to each item using a five-point Likert-type scale. After answering all the items, researcher sum their individual item scores to obtain a total score. For example, if a participant scores 3, 4, 2, 5, and 1 on five items, the total score would be 15. The total score will be divided by the number of items answered to find the average score. For instance, if the total score is 30 from 10 items, the average would be 3.0. Higher scores reflect a greater level of fear of missing out, while lower scores indicate less concern about missing experiences or events.

3.4.2 Interview

The pre-screening is conducted in order to choose the right participants to be interviewed. From the average score of all of the participants who answered the Google form, researcher will choose six with the highest score (High level of FOMO). The reason behind conducting interview is rooted in its ability to explore the complex, subjective experiences associated with the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Interview method allows researchers to ask open-ended questions and probe further into more specific answers. Open-ended questions encourage detailed responses, and avoid leading questions that might influence the participant's answers. Researcher should follow up with probing questions for clarification or deeper insights.

In-depth interviews enable participants to share their unique perspectives on how social media influences their feelings of missing out. Furthermore, through detailed conversations, interviews capture personal stories and insights about how FOMO affects their emotional well-being. This method facilitates an exploration of feelings like anxiety, stress, or loneliness, which are essential for understanding the broader influence of FOMO on well-being and possibly mental health. Then by interview also, researcher can identify the coping mechanism that students used to deal with FOMO and the emotional distress it causes.

Researcher must also possess good skills such as listening skills. In order for participants to feel comfortable discussing personal experiences, the researcher must conduct the interview in a setting that is secure, courteous, and judgment-free. This is crucial for establishing rapport.

Show real interest in what participants are saying, listen intently without interjecting, and acknowledge their ideas with nonverbal clues like nodding or vocal affirmations.

3.4.3 Reflective journal

In addition to semi-structured interviews, this study incorporates a reflective journal method to capture participants' personal experiences with FOMO, their emotional well-being, and coping mechanism over the time. Participants will be asked to document their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to FOMO in a journal for a duration of two weeks. Each participant will be provided with a guided template by researcher to facilitate self-reflection, such as describing moments when they felt FOMO, identifying the triggers, emotional impact, and explaining how they managed the situations. Journals can be maintained in either digital or handwritten format, based on participants' preferences. If participants choose the handwritten format, then researcher will provide hard copy templates to ensure comfort and convenience. Reflective journal method provides additional insights into how FOMO manifests in daily life and complements the data obtained from interviews. To maintain confidentiality, participants will be instructed not to include identifiable information. The data obtained from reflective journals will be analyzed thematically and triangulated with interview findings to enhance the depth and reliability of the study.

3.5 Research Approach

According to Neubauer et al., (2019), phenomenology approach is a form of qualitative research that focuses on the study of an individual's lived experiences within the world. In other words, Qualitative phenomenology research can be characterised as a method to research that aims to comprehend and investigate people's lived experiences of a certain phenomenon. With philosophical roots, phenomenological research aids in understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of commonly held preconceptions (Lester, 1999). Phenomenology in qualitative research explores the subjective and individual interpretations that people ascribe to their experiences, going beyond just characterising observable behaviours.

This study uses a phenomenological approach because it focuses on exploring the lived experiences of undergraduate female students regarding the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and its effects on well-being, as well as coping mechanisms. Phenomenology seeks to understand how individuals personally experience and interpret phenomena in their lives, making it the ideal method for this research. Rather than measuring FOMO or its effects statistically, this study aims to uncover the deeper meanings and emotions associated with FOMO through participants' own perspectives. This approach allows for a rich and detailed understanding of how FOMO is experienced in the context of social media and its influence on their emotional well-being.

3.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of themes within qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). There are six stages in thematic analysis, each stages build on the previous one which results in a comprehensive understanding of the data (Naeem et al., 2023). To begin with, researcher must becomes familiar with the data by reviewing transcripts and identifying initial impressions. Next, relevant sections are coded, such as statements about social media triggers or emotional impacts. These codes are grouped into themes, like "social media as a FOMO catalyst" or "emotional consequences of FOMO," which are then reviewed and refined to ensure clarity and alignment with the study's objectives. Themes are clearly defined and named, highlighting their relevance, and the findings are written into a narrative supported by participant quotes. This process ensures a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how social media shapes FOMO and its effects on emotional well-being, as well as the coping mechanism. Thematic analysis is a flexible and adaptable method that can be applied to various research contexts, allowing researchers to uncover rich and nuanced insights into the experiences, perspectives, and motivations of participants.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

It's critical to protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality, especially when discussing sensitive or intimate subjects like FOMO and its consequences on well-being. Confidentiality guarantees that the information supplied is safely stored and that only authorised personnel can access it, whereas anonymity entails making sure that participants' identities are

not connected to their answers. To comply with these standards, all data records must substitute identifiable information, such as names or contact information, with codes or pseudonyms. Securely secured physical places or encrypted digital files are the best ways to keep data safe from unwanted access. Participants should also be made aware of the intended use of their data, including guarantees that no reports or presentations would identify specific responses. These steps are essential for building confidence and promoting truthful involvement, both of which improve the calibre and dependability of the study results.

A crucial component of ethical research is making sure that participation is completely voluntary. Participants should not feel under any duress or pressure to participate in the study, especially if they are friends or peers, as this could unintentionally affect their choices. Participants are told that their participation is entirely voluntary and that their choice to join or to leave at any time will not have any consequences in order to uphold an ethical standard. Any information gathered from a participant before their withdrawal will not be included in the final analysis if they choose to withdraw. The study complies with ethical research guidelines and respects the autonomy of all participants by highlighting the voluntary nature of involvement and the freedom to withdraw.

Participants may feel emotionally uncomfortable during the data collection procedure since this research topic, which examines FOMO and its possible influence on well-being, is sensitive. All interview or survey questions should be carefully crafted to steer clear of invasive or excessively personal questions in order to reduce the risk. For example, rather than going into detail about particular cases of exclusion or discomfort, queries should concentrate on broad experiences or patterns. Information regarding available support services, including counselling, should also be given to participants in case they need it. Establishing a setting in which participants feel emotionally secure guarantees that the study is carried out responsibly and ethically.

3.8 Summary

In retrospect, the content of this chapter ensures the study is conducted systematically to achieve the research objectives. This chapter outlines the research design, including the

qualitative approach and methods for data collection and analysis. It describes the participant selection process and ethical considerations to ensure the study is systematic and reliable.

CHAPTER 4

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings derived from the qualitative data collected through interviews with six participants. The aim of this research was to explore the role of Social Media Platforms in shaping the Fear of Missing Out among female undergraduate students in UNIMAS, to understand the influence that FOMO has on an individual's emotional well-being, and to construct the coping mechanisms for handling Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed to analyze the transcribed data systematically and identify key patterns and themes. The chapter is structured around these themes, each presented with supporting quotations from the participants to highlight the richness and depth of the data. The findings are also discussed in relation to the research objectives and relevant literature, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.

4.1 Survey for Pre-Screening

In order to screen the right participants for this study, survey method was used. The survey was distributed by Google Forms over WhatsApp and Telegram, and the target participants were undergraduate female students studying Psychology and Counselling at UNIMAS. The survey was answered by 46 students. Other than measuring participants' FOMO level using the Fear Of Missing Out Scale (FOMOs'), it also screen for their internet and social media platforms usage because FOMO is often linked to excessive social media consumption.

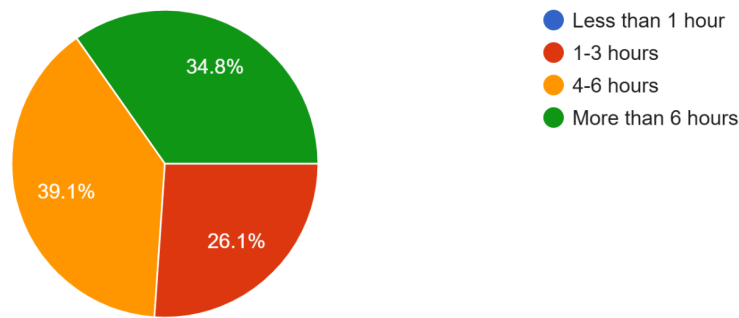


Figure 4.1 Pie Chart

Based on the pie chart of *'Social Media Usage'*, the data shows that the majority of the respondents (39.1%) spend 4-6 hours daily on social media, making this the most common usage duration. Following closely, over a third (34.8%) report spending more than 6 hours per day online. A quarter of the respondents (26.1%) use social media for 1-3 hours, while the category for less than 1 hour is not represented in the chart, suggesting no respondents fell into that range. Overall, the data indicates a high level of daily social media engagement among the surveyed individuals.

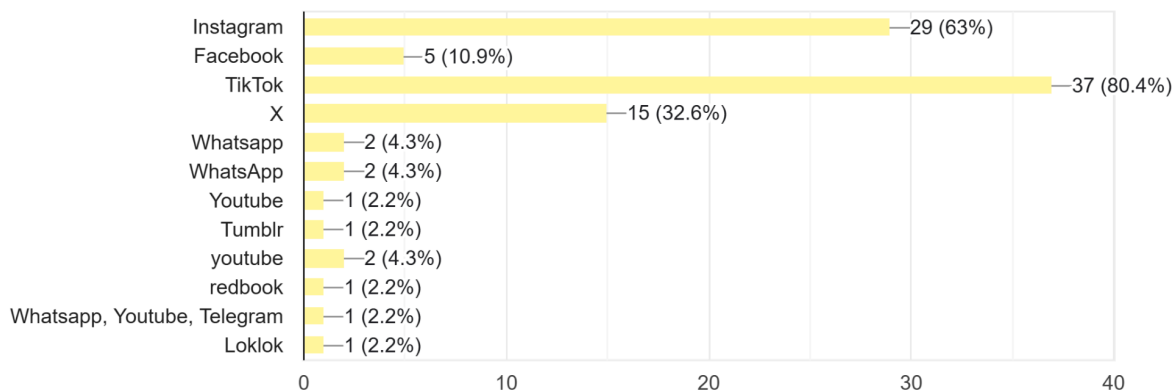


Figure 4.2 Horizontal Bar Chart

Based on the *'Most Frequently Used Social Media Platforms'* chart, it's evident that a significant portion of the respondents are drawn to platforms primarily associated with entertainment. TikTok (80.4%) and Instagram (63%) are the two most frequently used platforms.

These apps are highly popular because they excel at delivering entertainment through a constant stream of short, engaging videos and visually appealing content. Their design often uses algorithms to personalize feeds, ensuring users are continuously shown content they'll find interesting. This endless, tailored entertainment, combined with the ease of passive consumption, contributes significantly to their addictive nature, as users may find themselves compelled to keep scrolling and watching.

4.2 Interview Analysis

Participant	Age	Religion	Course	FOMO Level
P1	24	Christian	Psychology	Moderate to High
P2	22	Christian	Psychology	Moderate to High
P3	22	Islam	Counseling	High
P4	22	Islam	Counseling	High
P5	22	Islam	Counseling	High
P6	24	Islam	Counseling	Moderate to High

Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of Participants

4.3 Research Findings

This section presents the key findings derived from the participants' experiences and insights regarding the role of social media in shaping Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Through in-depth interviews, a few major themes emerged. Each theme is supported by direct responses from participants, highlighting how FOMO manifests in their lives and how they respond to it

4.3.1 Excessive Engagement with Social Media as a Contributing Factor to FOMO

Excessive engagement with social media was found to be a key element contributing to the development of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among participants. As participants became increasingly absorbed in their digital routines, feelings of missing out on events, trends, or news grew stronger, especially when they noticed others being socially active or involved in activities they were not part of. This section explores how frequent and prolonged social media use can gradually heighten the experience of FOMO in daily life.

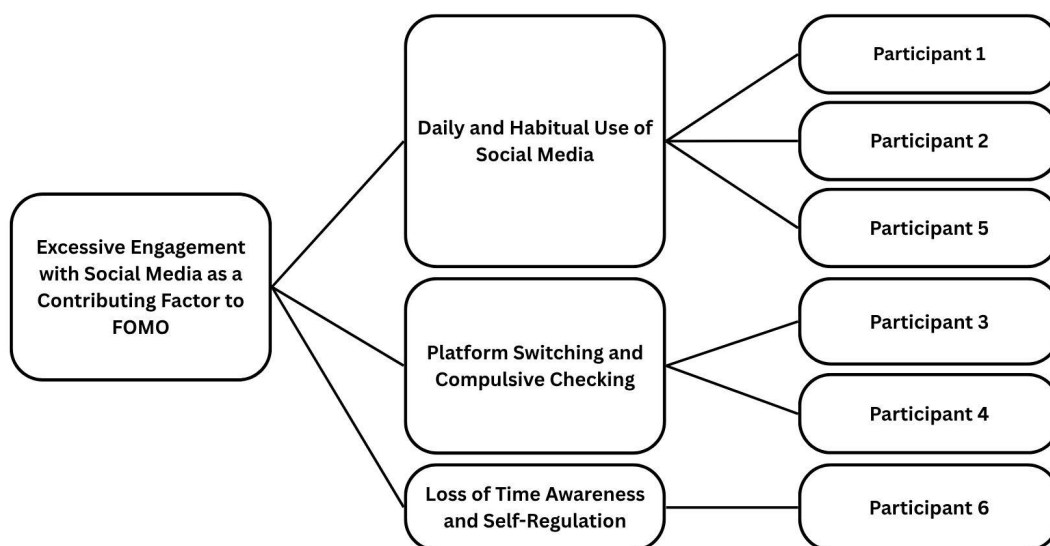


Figure 4.3

Daily and Habitual Use of Social Media

A significant pattern that emerged from participants' narratives is the habitual and near-compulsive use of social media on a daily basis. Participants consistently reported that engaging with platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, or messaging apps had become a regular part of their lives. Participant 1 confessed, *"I tak pernah the whole day tak buka, memang tak pernah... teruk jugak eh??"* This highlights not only the frequency of usage but also an

underlying awareness of potential over-dependence. The inability to go even a day without checking social media points to a reliance on these platforms for social connection, information, or emotional stimulation.

Participant 2 estimated spending six to seven hours daily on social media, particularly TikTok. *“As per the usage, I think maybe around six to seven hours per day? It varies actually but most of it is from TikTok.”* This level of exposure increases the likelihood of encountering content that portrays idealized or exciting moments from others’ lives. Moreover Participant 2 also add that she finds entertainment like recent updates or news through TikTok. Similarly, Participant 5 noted, *“If you ask about the duration, probably over two hours or four hours per app, it depends on my mood. But I really need to do it daily.”* indicating a sense of emotional necessity tied to online engagement. When social media use becomes deeply ingrained in daily routines, users become more susceptible to FOMO because they are consistently confronted with others’ curated experiences. This constant comparison can evoke feelings of inadequacy or exclusion, especially when one perceives that others are achieving more, enjoying life more fully, or participating in experiences they themselves are missing.

Furthermore, the habitual nature of social media use creates a cognitive environment where users feel the need to always remain digitally present. The fear of being left out or missing important updates, social events, or trends can compel individuals to maintain their daily engagement. Over time, this reinforces the emotional loop of FOMO, as individuals become anxious about disconnection and increasingly depend on social media to feel socially validated or informed.

Platform Switching and Compulsive Checking

Another clear behavioral pattern observed was the tendency to switch between social media platforms frequently and compulsively. Participant 3 illustrated this when she said, *“Sebab memang setiap masa saya akan scroll jugak. At least kalau macam whatsapp takda orang chat saya akan tengok X. Kalau X tak ada apa apa, saya pergi Instagram.”* This continuous switching behavior indicates restlessness and a persistent need for stimulation. Rather

than engaging with one platform purposefully, participants moved rapidly from one to another, searching for content that could satisfy their internal drive for connection or distraction. This behavior reflects an underlying fear of missing something important, entertaining, or socially significant.

Participant 4 described their routine in more detail, saying, *“Macam saya baru buka phone, saya buka TikTok, bila TikTok bosan saya buka Instagram, lepas Instagram saya buka TikTok balik. Then saya tutup phone, seminit kemudian saya buka balik.”* This pattern demonstrates a cycle of compulsive checking, which is closely linked to anxiety. The quick return to the same platforms within short periods suggests that the user does not find lasting satisfaction but feels compelled to continue seeking other people’s new content. Such compulsivity aligns with the experience of FOMO, where users fear that they might miss out on real-time updates, viral trends, or peers’ activities if they do not stay constantly connected.

The need to keep checking and switching between platforms increases users’ cognitive load and emotional fatigue, making them more vulnerable to the psychological effects of FOMO. Each refresh or platform change may offer a brief reward, such as a new post or story, but it also reinforces the anxiety of not knowing what others are doing. In this way, platform switching becomes both a symptom and a driver of FOMO, deepening users’ emotional dependence on digital engagement to avoid feeling excluded or left behind.

Loss of Time Awareness and Self-Regulation

Participant 6’s response highlighted how excessive social media engagement can lead to a loss of time awareness and difficulties in self-regulation. She shared, *“Dia macam kalau straight itu boleh dalam dua ke tiga jam, Non-stop. Ah sebab dia macam leka sampailah kalau waktu tu bateri Wawa full, boleh turun jadi ke twenty percent.”* describing how deeply absorbed they became in social media scrolling. This level of immersion suggests a detachment from physical and temporal cues, such as battery life or the passing of time. The user becomes so engrossed in consuming content that they neglect real-world responsibilities or self-monitoring practices.

The participant also mentioned having an average screen time of almost nine hours per day during college “*kalau dekat kolej ini, ah almost nine hour average screen time per day untuk setiap minggu*”. This excessive engagement indicates that the individual is not just a frequent user but is also struggling to set boundaries around their social media consumption. When users lose the ability to regulate their own behavior, they often remain online far longer than intended. This extended engagement increases the chances of exposure to content that triggers FOMO, such as friends attending events, traveling, or achieving milestones.

The inability to self-regulate social media use intensifies the emotional effects of FOMO. As users spend more time scrolling, they are continuously comparing their lives to others, often without conscious awareness. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy, low self-worth, or exclusion, especially when their own lives appear less exciting or fulfilling in comparison. When time is lost to passive consumption and self-regulation is weak, individuals are left feeling emotionally drained and disconnected from their own experiences. Consequently, the lack of control over social media use not only leads to wasted time but also exacerbates the emotional distress associated with FOMO.

4.3.2 Self-Evaluation Driven by Upward Social Comparison

Another recurring pattern among participants was their tendency to compare themselves with others they saw on social media. This act of comparison, often unconscious, would trigger self-evaluations based on other people’s visible successes, lifestyles, and achievements. Although some comparisons might be harmless, the upward nature of these comparisons often left participants feeling lacking or left out. These feelings were not always dramatic, but subtle forms of fear of missing out (FOMO) were evident as participants questioned their worth, progress, or decisions.

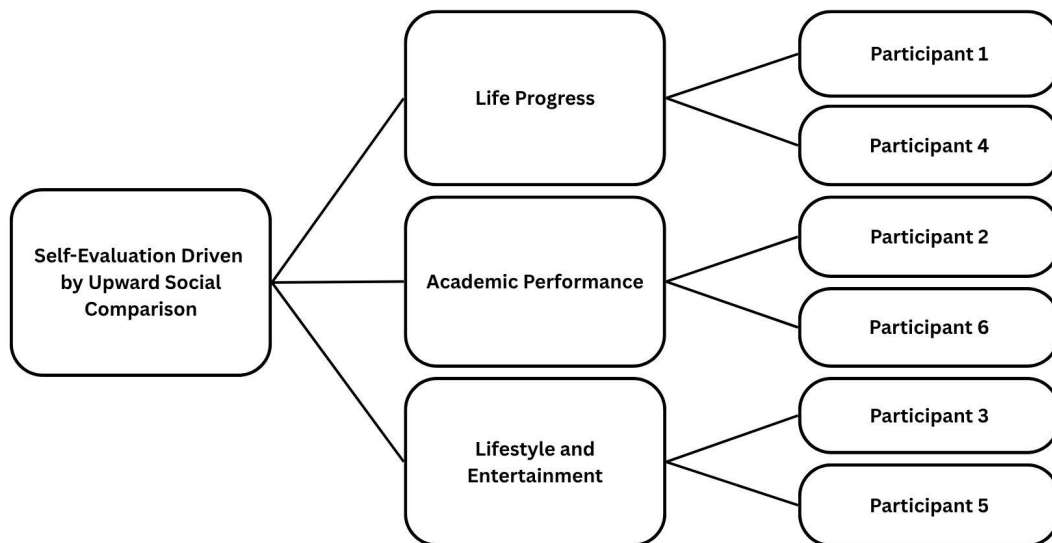


Figure 4.4

Life Progress

Participant 1 shared her feelings of being left out when comparing her life progress to others around her. She stated, *“To be honest adalah sometimes saya rasa macam ih bestnya kalau jadi kerja macamni ke apa kan. Dia umur 24 dia dah beli kereta, dah start hidup dia, ada yang umur 24 dah kahwin apa semua, so macam sometime saya feel left out la jugak, macam what am I doing in life.”* This reflection shows how observing the milestones achieved by others can create internal pressure and the fear of being left behind.

Participant 4 echoed this sentiment more intensely, describing how constant comparison made her feel inferior. She said, *“Saya rasa saya ni teruk. Sebab saya fikir ‘kenapa orang ni boleh ada, kenapa aku tak ada?’. Bila saya tengok orang lain dah achieve benda tu, I feel like I’m the worst person in the world.”* Her words reflect a deeper emotional toll where the act of comparison not only leads to dissatisfaction but also contributes to negative self-worth.

Together, these experiences highlight how social media can push users to measure their worth based on others' visible milestones. It shows that FOMO is not always about events or trends, it can also grow quietly from comparing where one stands in life compared to others.

Academic Performance

Participant 2 illustrated how academic success seen on social media or among peers often became a reference point for self-worth. She said, *“When I see they achieve something academically, I put them as a benchmark. Like, oh, I need to get to that point as well. I need to do something to get to that point as well. Because I do feel like why didn't I get the same when I feel like my effort is more or less?”* The comparison here is not passive but actively shapes her goals and expectations. While this can be motivating, it also sets up a potential disappointment when results do not align with perceived efforts, subtly giving rise to the fear of being academically slow.

Participant 6 had a similar reflection. She shared, *“Bila keluar je result, Wawa rasa Wawa dah buat yang terbaik. Tapi bila tengok result, Wawa tengok macam eh kenapa eh? Kenapa benda ni jadi dekat aku?”* Despite being confident in her effort, comparing outcomes made her question her performance. The disappointment came not only from her own result, but from how her achievements measured up against others'. This led to frustration and a creeping sense of not being good enough.

In these examples, the comparisons were deeply connected to the participants' academic self-perception. Although they were not necessarily competing with others, there was a clear sense of falling behind. This emotional response closely mirrors the discomfort often associated with FOMO, not from being left out of social events, but from feeling overlooked or left behind in terms of academic success and recognition.

Lifestyle and Entertainment

Participant 3 described her reaction to seeing others enjoy vacations or special experiences, saying, *“Contoh yang macam saya bagi tadi yang dia pergi vacation ke kan, saya rasa hmm comparison tu selalu ada. Saya rasa tak adil. Dia boleh pergi tapi saya tak.”* Her response illustrates how even non-essential content on social media, like travel or life updates,

can evoke a sense of missing out. The feeling of unfairness, although mild, adds emotional weight to what might seem like casual scrolling.

Participant 5 also noted this feeling, even within a recreational context like gaming. She said, *“Like in the gaming context right, everything is about achievement and progress and the collection that you have. So yeah, of course it will definitely bug me out, like I should have done better.”* This shows that comparison and performance-based evaluation are not limited to academic or life milestones. Even in apps meant for entertainment, there is still pressure to keep up, collect more, or reach a certain level of accomplishment.

In both cases, the participants felt that others were enjoying or accomplishing more, which prompted negative self-reflection. While these moments may not carry the same weight as life or academic comparisons, they still reveal how pervasive social comparison is, and how it quietly feeds into the experience of FOMO in everyday digital life.

4.3.3 Emotional Impacts Associated with Fear of Missing Out

Participants in this study shared a range of emotional reactions connected to their experiences of FOMO. FOMO was often accompanied by strong emotional responses, particularly sadness, anger, and insecurity. These emotions, to some, were long-lasting and deeply internalized, showing how the digital experiences of others can directly shape an individual’s psychological and emotional state. The responses reflect how participants not only compare their own lives to what they see online but also internalize the perceived gap between themselves and others, leading to impacts on their emotional well-being.

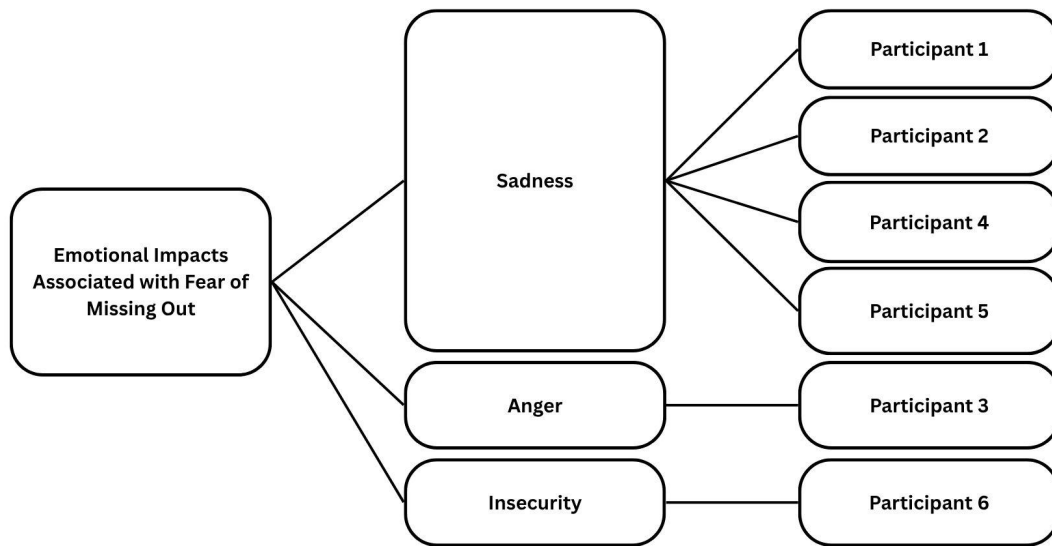


Figure 4.5

Sadness

Sadness emerged as one of the most prevalent emotional consequences of FOMO. Participant 1 shared that being unable to attend family events, especially while living away from home, made her feel emotionally isolated. *“I lebih kepada miss out on social event la. For example what I said just now, yang pasal family event ke apa kan, ada rasa sedih, ada rasa risau, pastu saya rasa lonely kat sini sorang sorang”*. These emotions were not just about missing the activity itself but about the disconnection from shared moments and a fear of becoming distant from loved ones.

Similarly, Participant 2 reflected on her feelings after seeing others enjoying themselves online: *“I think how it impacts my overall mood... I think I will be sad about it. Macam, oh it looks so fun, if I were there, I would have so much fun. I would regret the things that I didn't do.”* Her sadness was rooted in a sense of regret and unfulfilled potential, suggesting that the emotional cost of missing out lies not only in the activity missed but also in the imagined joy it could have brought. The realization that others are experiencing fun while one is not tends to

magnify emotional distress, especially when it involves events that are highly social or recreational in nature.

Participant 4 reinforced this emotional theme by expressing sadness about missing public events such as concerts and food festivals. These events are often portrayed online as vibrant, joyful, and culturally significant, increasing the fear of being left out. The feeling of sadness in this context stemmed from seeing “everyone else” having shared experiences that foster social bonding and collective memory. *“Saya akan rasa sedih kalau saya tak dapat attend social events macam concert, foodfest, ah macam tu lah. Benda gempak kan, semua orang pergi tapi saya tak dapat pergi”*. For university students especially, such missed events can intensify the sense of being on the margins of campus life.

Participant 5 provided a more specific and niche perspective by discussing her emotional reaction to missing limited-time gaming events. In her words, missing out made her feel sad, regretful and disappointed. *“I think, again in gaming context, I feel sad, regretful and disappointed because I've lost a chance that I probably won't get back. Because some of the events are like limited, so they won't really do it again.”* These events were often once-in-a-lifetime opportunities in the gaming community, and missing them created a sense of irreversible loss. While digital in nature, these events carried emotional value for her, comparable to social or in-person experiences. This highlights how FOMO-induced sadness can extend to digital spaces that hold personal or social significance, not just physical ones.

Altogether, these accounts illustrate that sadness tied to FOMO is not momentary. It often lingers, especially when the missed experiences involve emotional connections, personal interests, or significant life milestones. The participants' stories reflect a broader emotional impact, one where the digital portrayal of “what others are doing” triggers deep-seated feelings of inadequacy and longing, which can persist long after the posts have disappeared.

Anger

While sadness was the most commonly expressed emotion, Participant 3 introduced a different yet equally important emotional response: anger. Her feelings emerged when seeing someone she knew attending an event without her being there. This scenario triggered

long-lasting anger, as she stated, *“Bila kita nampak seseorang tu post yang macam contoh tadi attending event tu tapi kita tak ada, dia jadi... marah tu lama. Dia macam tak boleh terima hakikat.”* Her reaction reflected not just disappointment about missing out, but a deeper feeling of being excluded or left behind. Unlike sadness, which may arise from passive observation, anger often stems from a perceived violation of trust or expectation in relationships.

This particular form of FOMO reveals how exclusion, especially from social groups or events that one feels entitled to be part of, can lead to resentment and damage personal relationships. For Participant 3, the fact that others were enjoying themselves wasn't the issue. Instead, it was the emotional hurt from not being included. FOMO in this case became a catalyst for anger because it highlighted social hierarchies or perceived rejection, which are deeply painful experiences for individuals.

Moreover, her inability to let go of the anger for a long time suggests that FOMO has the potential to instigate emotional rumination, where the mind replays the incident repeatedly, reinforcing negative emotions. This type of long-lasting emotional distress could even affect interpersonal trust, influence future social dynamics, and potentially lead to withdrawal or confrontation.

Insecurity

Participant 6 expressed a strong sense of insecurity when she realized she had missed out on major social events, or more specifically, news that others were already aware of. Her reaction was filled with self-questioning, such as *“Kenapa aku tak tahu eh? Macam mana aku boleh tak tahu?”* These internal thoughts suggest not just disappointment, but a deeper feeling of being left behind or excluded from shared awareness. The insecurity stems from a perceived gap between herself and others, a fear that she is not as socially or contextually informed as she should be.

This insecurity then triggers a compulsive urge to catch up, particularly regarding news or significant happenings. She described how this feeling pushed her to immediately start searching online to find out *“apa benda ini, apa benda tu, apa yang jadi hari ini.”* This behavior indicates an underlying anxiety about being uninformed in social settings, possibly worrying that others might be discussing something important that she cannot contribute to. Unlike those who

feel left out due to not attending events, her distress is rooted in not being part of the conversation because she lacked access to timely information.

In this way, Participant 6's experience highlights how FOMO can manifest not only as exclusion from physical participation but also as a fear of being socially uninformed, which in turn fuels insecurity. The need to stay constantly updated becomes both a coping mechanism and a source of stress, reinforcing a cycle of emotional discomfort and compulsive digital behavior.

4.3.4 Coping Strategies Employed to Manage Fear of Missing Out

The emotional discomfort caused by the fear of missing out (FOMO) led participants to adopt various strategies to help manage and reduce its impact. These strategies differ depending on personal preferences, emotional awareness, and available support systems. From developing internal acceptance to seeking emotional support or turning to alternative activities, the participants shared how they try to stay mentally and emotionally balanced in the face of constant social comparison and online stimulation.

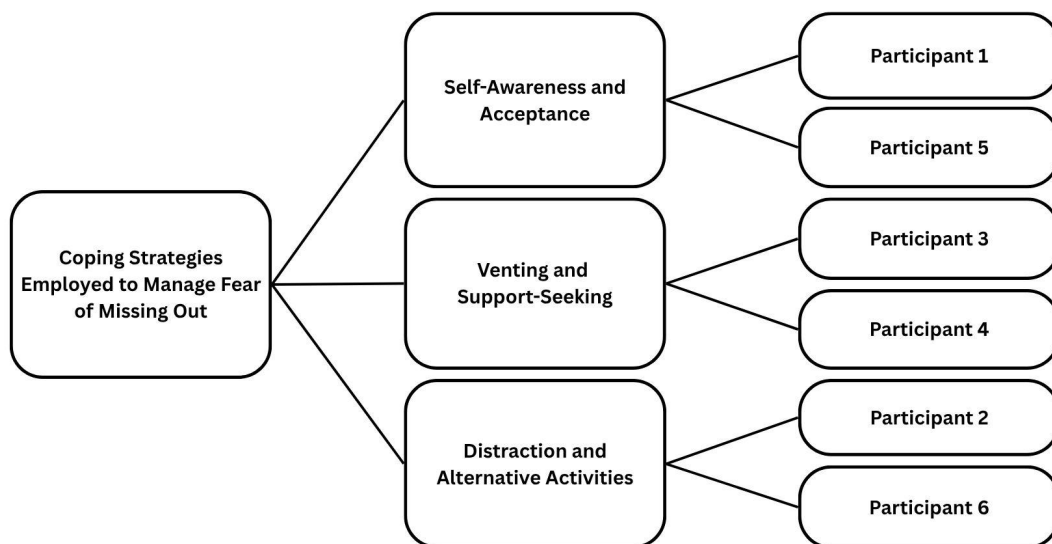


Figure 4.6

Self-Awareness and Acceptance

Participant 1 described how she chooses to manage FOMO by focusing on a positive mindset and reframing her thoughts. She mentioned, *"I will counter balik dengan positive mindset. Macam I, kalau I rasa FOMO I kena cakap dengan myself yang this is my life."* Her strategy centers around acknowledging the uniqueness of her own life journey and not letting social media dictate what she should feel. By reminding herself that her path is different from others, she grounds herself emotionally and avoids getting too caught up in feelings of inadequacy or missing out.

Participant 5 also showed a strong sense of self-awareness in her approach. She shared, *"Basically, just like reminding myself that I don't really have to experience everything, like the most of it. I try to focus on what I can do and try to enjoy the process lah instead of just looking at the destination, the achievement."* Her coping method is rooted in the idea of focusing on the present and valuing her own pace, instead of constantly chasing what others are achieving. This mindset helps her stay emotionally balanced and reduces the pressure that comes from comparing herself with others online.

Both participants demonstrate that self-awareness and acceptance can play a significant role in coping with FOMO. By recognizing their own limits and embracing their personal journey, they manage to protect their emotional well-being and reduce the negative effects that often arise from online comparisons.

Venting and Support-Seeking

For other participants, talking about their feelings (venting) was a significant way to cope. Participant 3 said, *"Meluah. Saya akan bagitau orang lain yang saya tak puas hati pasal benda tu."* By expressing her dissatisfaction to someone she trusts, she finds relief and emotional clarity. Venting allows her to let go of emotional pressure and prevents the feelings from building up inside. This form of coping is not only about sharing but also about validating her emotions through connection with others.

However, when venting was not possible, Participant 3 also engaged in meaningful and relaxing activities to cope on her own. She added, *"If not, saya macam stop sekejap daripada"*

social media, saya pergi main game ke atau saya buat something crochet ke, mengait.” In these moments, she chose to step away from digital content and focus on offline activities that give her peace and enjoyment. Gaming and crocheting allowed her to be present in the moment, distracting her from comparison or regret triggered by social media posts.

Participant 4 also expressed the importance of talking about her feelings. She said, *“Meluah if saya ada orang lain at that time. If takda orang saya distract diri buat benda lain.”* This reflects a balanced approach to managing FOMO. When someone is available, she chooses to talk, meanwhile when no one is around, she distracts herself through other means. Both actions help her regain emotional clarity and reduce the lingering effects of FOMO. The ability to adapt based on the situation shows emotional flexibility.

These participants highlight that expressing emotions and seeking support, either through The responses from these participants show that venting and support-seeking can provide immediate relief from the emotional strain caused by FOMO. Talking things out helps to validate feelings, while turning to other calming activities offers a secondary way to cope when support isn't available.

Distraction and Alternative Activities

Distraction also played a major role in helping participants manage their emotions when FOMO became overwhelming. Participant 2 shared that she often redirects her attention away from the triggering content. She explained, *“I think distractions. When I see my friends posting on social media, for example, and I have that feeling of fear of missing out, I distract myself from that source.”* This method allows her to protect her emotional space by intentionally stepping away from social media and shifting her attention elsewhere. Distraction helps her avoid overthinking and minimizes the chance of comparing herself to others. She recognizes that continuously engaging with such content only worsens her emotional state, so she distances herself from it when necessary.

Participant 6 also preferred doing hands-on activities that reduce screen time and social media exposure. She explained, *“Wawa akan masak atau mengemas, tapi mostly luangkan masa dengan masak. Bila kita dah most of the time tu kita dah banyak sangat masa dekat dapur, so*

kita jarang main phone.” For her, cooking and cleaning are more than just chores, they are effective ways to stay engaged in the present moment and to limit the time spent on her phone. They help her reduce screen time and prevent her from getting drawn into the online world where FOMO often takes root. Her response shows that engaging in alternative, offline activities can be a healthy way to prevent the emotional weight of FOMO from growing too intense.

Distraction and alternative activities offer participants a practical way to manage FOMO by keeping them engaged in the present. Whether through hobbies or daily routines, these methods reduce screen time and shift their focus away from social media, helping them maintain emotional control.

4.4 Summary

In retrospect, through thematic analysis of the interview data, four key themes emerged, each offering insights into how FOMO is shaped, experienced, and managed. The findings from this chapter emphasize that FOMO is not only influenced by social media behavior but also deeply tied to users’ emotional well-being and their individual coping mechanisms. By understanding these patterns, we can better appreciate how young adults navigate the complex relationship between online engagement and emotional well-being. The next chapter will further discuss these findings in relation to existing literature and highlight the implications for mental health awareness and digital well-being practices among university students.

CHAPTER 5

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes and discusses the main findings of the study. It explains what the results mean and why they are important. The chapter also highlights how the findings can be useful, particularly in relation to mental health support, counseling, and digital media awareness. In addition, this chapter discusses the limitations of the study and offers recommendations for future research and practical improvements.

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 The Role of Social Media Overuse in Shaping FOMO

The findings of this study reinforce existing literature that links excessive social media use to the development of FOMO, particularly through the mechanism of social comparison. Participants reported spending a significant portion of their day on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, which are known for their visually rich and curated content. Compared to text-based platforms such as Facebook or X (formerly Twitter), these image-centric applications intensify upward comparisons by continuously showcasing idealized portrayals of travel, achievements, and social events. This observation aligns with Zhang et al. (2021) and Tandon et al. (2024), who found that personalized and visual content increases the likelihood of FOMO by encouraging users to compare themselves with others. The behavior observed in this study, including compulsive checking and switching between platforms, reflects a form of digital vigilance driven by the fear of missing out on socially significant updates. This supports Alutaybi et al. (2019), who identified features like stories, notifications, and impression metrics as key contributors to FOMO. Over time, this high engagement reinforces a cycle of emotional dependency, where individuals feel compelled to stay connected despite recognizing its negative emotional effects. These findings suggest that the design of social media platforms plays a substantial role in shaping user behavior and emotional responses, making digital awareness and self-regulation essential for mitigating FOMO.

5.1.2 The Impact of Social Comparison on FOMO

Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) provides a useful framework for understanding how individuals evaluate themselves in relation to others, especially in ambiguous or uncertain situations. This study found that students frequently engaged in upward comparisons, often measuring their academic progress, lifestyle, and achievements against those of their peers. Even when aware that social media presents only the best parts of others' lives, participants still experienced feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. These comparisons were not limited to major life events but extended to everyday experiences, reinforcing the perception that others were living more fulfilling or successful lives. This behavior is consistent with findings by Steinberger and Kim (2023), who reported that frequent upward comparisons on social media are associated with lower subjective well-being and increased anxiety. The pressure to keep up with peers, whether academically or socially, contributes to a persistent sense of falling behind. For students in psychology and counseling programs, this is particularly noteworthy, as it challenges the assumption that those trained in mental health are naturally more resilient. Instead, their heightened awareness of emotional dynamics may make them more sensitive to the effects of FOMO, emphasizing the need for self-compassion and critical media literacy.

5.1.3 Emotional Impacts of FOMO

The emotional impact of FOMO was evident in the range of responses shared by participants, including sadness, anger, and insecurity. These emotions were often tied to missed social events, academic milestones, or trending content, and in many cases, they lingered beyond the initial experience. This supports the findings of Gugushvili et al. (2020) and Çifçi and Kumcağız (2023), who reported that individuals with higher levels of FOMO tend to experience lower emotional well-being and more frequent negative emotional states. The distress was not limited to feelings of exclusion but extended to deeper concerns about self-worth and personal progress. Even when participants recognized that social media often shows only the best parts of people's lives, they still found it difficult to avoid comparing themselves. This emotional discomfort, especially when tied to close relationships or significant life events, suggests that FOMO can have a lasting effect on self-perception and emotional stability.

5.1.4 Coping Strategies for Managing FOMO

Despite the emotional challenges associated with FOMO, participants demonstrated a range of coping strategies that helped them manage its effects. These included mindfulness practices, digital disengagement, grounding activities such as crocheting or gaming, and seeking emotional support through venting. These approaches align with the coping mechanisms outlined by Littman and Russo (2024), who found that mindfulness, digital detox, and self-reliance are commonly used among emerging adults dealing with FOMO. While these strategies did not eliminate FOMO entirely, they helped reduce its intensity and promote healthier emotional responses. Participants also described turning off notifications, limiting screen time, and redirecting their focus to offline activities as ways to regain control over their emotional state and reduce the compulsive urge to stay constantly connected.

Although participants were not immune to FOMO, their academic background in psychology and counseling appeared to offer certain advantages. Several demonstrated the ability to recognize and reframe their thoughts, using affirmations and present-focused thinking to reduce the emotional weight of comparison. These strategies reflect cognitive and emotional skills emphasized in counseling education and suggest that while FOMO is difficult to avoid, it can be managed through intentional reflection and self-regulation. This supports the observations made by Myers et al. (2003) and El-Ghoroury et al. (2012), who found that psychology students are more likely to engage in wellness practices due to their exposure to emotional regulation concepts. Their ability to articulate their feelings and respond with appropriate coping strategies suggests a level of psychological insight that may contribute to long-term emotional resilience.

5.2 Implications

Although the concept of FOMO has been widely studied in Western and global contexts, there is still limited research exploring its relevance within the Malaysian cultural and academic setting. This study helps to address that gap by providing insight into how FOMO is experienced by Malaysian female psychology and counseling students. It shows that cultural values, academic environment, and social expectations intersect with digital media usage to shape the

emotional responses of students. By examining this issue in a localized context, the study enriches the broader body of literature while offering a more nuanced understanding of how social comparison and emotional well-being operate within Malaysia's diverse and interconnected student population.

The findings also reinforce that FOMO is not a trivial or passing trend but a growing psychological phenomenon that warrants attention. As digital engagement becomes more embedded in daily life, especially through platforms like Instagram and TikTok, the emotional consequences of FOMO are becoming more prominent. This study adds to a growing recognition that FOMO can negatively affect students' well-being, motivation, and self-worth. Therefore, it is vital for mental health professionals, educators, and university administrators to begin developing appropriate interventions. These may include preventive programs, digital well-being workshops, or structured support systems to help students build healthier habits around social media and cope with feelings of exclusion or inadequacy. Proactive measures are essential to equip students with the tools to manage FOMO before it escalates into more serious emotional or mental health concerns.

Importantly, this study also raises awareness about the community's perceptions of psychology and counseling students. There is often a misconception that those studying or working in the mental health field are emotionally resilient by default. However, the findings suggest that even individuals with mental health training can experience emotional fatigue, mental illness, or digital burnout. Acknowledging these challenges stereotypes and promotes a more empathetic and realistic view of mental health professionals, not as immune, but as individuals who also need support and self-care. This awareness may foster a more compassionate academic culture that encourages all students, regardless of their background, to seek help without stigma.

5.3 Limitations

One major limitation is the relatively small and homogeneous sample size. The study focused on female young adults (aged 20-26) from a specific academic background at UNIMAS namely Psychology and Counseling Students. While this targeted approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the phenomenon within this particular population, it limits the generalizability of

the results to a broader population. The experiences and perceptions of FOMO, well-being and coping mechanisms may vary significantly across different demographics, such as males, individuals in other age groups, or students from different academic fields. A larger and more diverse sample would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of FOMO and its influence, enhancing the external validity of the study.

Another limitation arises from the reliance on self-reported data through interviews. Self-report measures are susceptible to various biases, including social desirability bias. Participants may tend to underreport negative experiences with FOMO or overstate well-being to present themselves in a more favorable light. This bias can distort the accuracy of the data, potentially leading to an underestimation or overestimation of the actual influence of FOMO on individuals' lives.

Last but not least is the temporal limitations. This study uses a cross-sectional design, which means that data is collected at a single point in time. As a result, it can establish associations but cannot determine causality. Data collection process is conducted at a specific point in time, offering a cross-sectional view of the relationship between social media, FOMO, well-being, and coping mechanism. However, these experiences are likely to evolve, influenced by factors such as academic stress, changes in social media trends, or personal growth.

5.4 Recommendations

This study highlights several areas for improvement in how FOMO and emotional well-being are understood and addressed, especially in a university setting. The following recommendations aim to support future research and shape a more equipped generation of mental health practitioners.

Future studies should consider including a more diverse sample to improve the generalizability of findings. This research focused exclusively on female psychology and counseling undergraduates at one Malaysian university, which provides valuable insight but also limits the ability to apply the results to broader student populations. By including male students, individuals from different faculties, and participants from other universities across Malaysia,

future researchers can examine how demographic and academic backgrounds influence the experience of FOMO and its emotional impact. Cultural, gender, and academic norms may shape both how FOMO is perceived and how individuals cope with it. Such findings would enrich the existing literature and help inform more inclusive mental health interventions for university students.

Other than that, UNIMAS and any university offering psychology and counseling programs could introduce a dedicated subject or module focused on digital well-being and responsible social media use. As social media continues to play a major role in students' emotional lives, it is essential that future mental health professionals are equipped not only with theoretical knowledge but also with personal digital awareness and healthy online habits. Introducing such a course would allow psychology and counseling students to better understand how online spaces influence mental health, both in themselves and their future clients. This initiative is timely and necessary, as it aligns with the evolving demands of the digital era and prepares students to navigate modern challenges with both professionalism and self-awareness.

Overall, these recommendations offer practical steps that can be taken by researchers, educators, and institutions to better support students in managing FOMO and maintaining their emotional well-being in today's digital age.

5.5 Summary

This chapter discussed the key findings of the study in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks. It emphasizes how excessive use of visual-based social media platforms contributes to FOMO through social comparison, leading to negative emotional impacts. Although the participants were psychology and counseling students, they were not immune to FOMO, though their training provided them with better self-awareness and coping strategies.

In addition, it also highlighted the relevance of FOMO within the Malaysian academic context, calling attention to the need for culturally sensitive mental health initiatives. Practical implications were discussed, including the importance of digital well-being education and breaking harmful stereotypes about mental health (psychology and counseling) students. Finally, recommendations were offered to guide future research and improve institutional support,

including diversifying study samples and introducing a subject focused on healthy social media use in line with today's digital realities.

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Appendix
Appendix A
Fear of Missing Out Scale: FoMOs
Przybylski, Murayama, DeHann, & Gladwell (2013)

Participant Instructions

Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the scale provided please indicate how true each statement is of your general experiences. Please answer according to what really reflects your experiences rather than what you think your experiences should be. Please treat each item separately from every other item.

Response Anchors

Not at all true of me		1
Slightly true of me		2
Moderately true of me		3
Very true of me		4
Extremely true of me		5

Items

1. I fear others have more rewarding experiences than me.
2. I fear my friends have more rewarding experiences than me.
3. I get worried when I find out my friends are having fun without me.
4. I get anxious when I don't know what my friends are up to.
5. It is important that I understand my friends "in jokes."
6. Sometimes, I wonder if I spend too much time keeping up with what is going on.
7. It bothers me when I miss an opportunity to meet up with friends.
8. When I have a good time it is important for me to share the details online (e.g. updating status).
9. When I miss out on a planned get-together it bothers me.
10. When I go on vacation, I continue to keep tabs on what my friends are doing.

Calculating Individual Scores

Individual scores can be computed by averaging responses to all ten items and forms a reliable composite measure ($\alpha = .87$ to $.90$).

Appendix B

Interview questions tailored to the research objectives and questions:

Role of Social Media in Shaping FOMO

1. Which social media platforms do you use most frequently, and how often do you engage with them?
2. What specific features of social media (e.g., stories, live streams, or event notifications) trigger feelings of FOMO for you?
3. How do posts about social gatherings, vacations, or achievements by others affect how you view your own experiences and choices?
4. In what ways does seeing others' online activities influence your decision-making, such as attending events or participating in trends?

Influence of FOMO on Emotional Well-Being

1. How do you feel when you miss out on social events or trending activities shared by others on social media?
2. Have you ever experienced emotional exhaustion or burnout from trying to stay constantly connected online? If so, can you share more about that?
3. How often do you find yourself comparing your life to others online, and what emotional impact does this have on you?
4. Can you describe how FOMO impacts your overall mood and how long these feelings typically last?

Coping Mechanisms for Handling FOMO

1. What strategies have you developed to manage feelings of FOMO when they arise?
2. Are there any activities or habits that help you reduce the impact of FOMO?
3. When do you feel the need to disconnect from social media, and how do you go about doing it?
4. What role does self-awareness play in managing your feelings of FOMO? How do you remind yourself to focus on your own experiences?

Bonus: How does FOMO affect your consumption habits?

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

You have been invited to take part in the research project described below. Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read the following explanation of this study. These statements describe the purpose, procedures, benefits, risks, discomforts, and precautions in participating in this research. Also described is your right to withdraw from the study at any time. To participate in this study, you must be **a third year female undergraduate student aged 20 to 26, currently enrolled in a counseling or psychology program from Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development (FCSHD) at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).**

Purpose of the study:

1. To explore the role of Social Media Platforms in shaping the Fear of Missing Out among female undergraduate students in UNIMAS
2. To understand the influence that Fear of Missing Out has on an individual's emotional well-being
3. To construct the coping mechanisms for handling Fear of Missing Out

Explanation of Procedures:

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be required to participate in an interview with the researcher. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of social media platforms in shaping the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among undergraduate students, understand the influence that FOMO has on an individual's emotional well-being, and construct the coping mechanisms for handling Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). The interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes and will be conducted at a time and place convenient for you. During the interview, topics such as the impact of social media, experiences of FOMO, emotional well-being, and coping mechanisms will be explored. With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded for

accurate transcription and analysis. You are free to ask any questions at any point during the interview. In addition to the interview, you will be asked to keep a reflective journal for two weeks. This journal will help you document instances of FOMO, what triggered it, its emotional impact, and how you responded to it. You can choose to keep in either digital or handwritten format. Had you chosen the physical format, you will be provided with hard copies of guided template. At the end of the two weeks, researcher will collect the journal for analysis.

Risk and Discomforts:

There are minimal risks associated with this study. However, you may experience mild emotional discomfort when discussing topics related to social media usage and personal experiences of FOMO. If you feel uncomfortable at any point, you are free to skip questions or withdraw from the study without penalty.

Benefits of this study:

Your participation in this study will contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between social media and FOMO, potentially guiding future interventions to support students' emotional well-being. While there may not be direct benefits to you, your input will help shape valuable insights for future research and university initiatives.

Confidentiality:

All information you provide will remain strictly confidential. Your responses will be anonymized, and any identifying information will be removed from the final report. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only the researcher will know what your number is. Data will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and the supervisor.

Right of Refusal to Participate and Withdraw Without Prejudice:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time without facing any negative consequences. Your decision will not affect your relationship with the researcher, university, or your academic standing. If you wish to do so, simply let the researcher know.

Rights and Questions:

If you have any questions or feedback concerning this research project, you may ask the researcher during the interview or contact the researcher with the contact details below:

Researcher:

Nursyifa Binti Johnny

H/P: 013-6596426

Email: 82878@siswa.unimas.my

Consent Statement:

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study and understand that you may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix D

Reflective Journal

Date & Time	FOMO Experience (How it occurred and what triggered It)	Impact on Emotional Well-being (Feelings, thoughts, reactions)	Coping Mechanism Used (Actions taken to manage FOMO)

Appendix E

Sample Transcript (Participant 3)

Day: Saturday

Date: 12 April 2025

Time: 02:15 P.M -02:40 P.M

Location: Laman Ilmu Kolej Cempaka

Interviewer: Assalamualaikum dan selamat tengahari kepada saudara, nama saya adalah Nursyifa Binti Johnny dan saya merupakan pelajar tahun 3 kaunseling. Tujuan interview ini diadakan adalah untuk mendapatkan data bagi FYP saya yang bertajuk '**Exploring The Role Of Social Media In Shaping The Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) Among Undergraduate Students In Sarawak**'. Jadi sebelum kita mula boleh kamu perkenalkan diri dulu?

Participant: Nama saya Siti Nur Syahirah Binti Hamid, saya adalah pelajar tahun 3 UNIMAS. Saya berasal dari Johor, dan saya anak kedua daripada tiga orang adik beradik.

Interviewer: Ok, sebelum kita mulakan dengan soalan yang pertama, boleh Syahirah kongsi apa yang Syahirah faham tentang FOMO?

Participant: Fomo ni dia singkatan daripada Fear of Missing Out kan? Dia macam seseorang yang dia nak juga tau tentang perkara tu, so bila orang cakap pasal benda tu dia tak tertinggal. Dia nak tau juga, sebab dia nak in the conversation jugak.

Interviewer: Definisi FOMO mengikut internet adalah perasaan takut, bimbang, atau anxious yang kita terlepas sesuatu menyeronokkan yang orang lain buat. Jadi bila FOMO ni terlalu kuat, dia boleh menyebabkan severe emotional impact seperti anxiety atau semua tu. Jadi so far kita punya definisi align la. Jadi kita boleh teruskan ke topic yang pertama iaitu *Role of Social Media in Shaping FOMO*. Untuk soalan yang pertama, '*Which social media platforms do you use most frequently, and how often do you engage with them?*'

Participant: Hmm whatsapp, X, Instagram, TikTok, haa tu lah yang saya selalu guna.

Interviewer: Jadi kalau dalam sehari rasanya berapa lama guna in total semua apps tu?

Participant: kalau in total, saya boleh cakap lebih 6 jam. Sebab memang setiap masa saya akan scroll jugak. At least kalau macam whatsapp takda orang chat saya akan tengok X. Kalau X tak ada apa apa, saya pergi Instagram

Interviewer: Ok soalan kedua, *'What specific features of social media trigger feelings of FOMO for you?'*

Participant: Boleh bagi contoh?

Interviewer: Contoh mungkin kalau Instagram story, macam kita nampak orang pergi ke event ni tapi kita tak ikut.

Participant: Kalau Instagram tu story la, saya memang akan habiskan story orang so saya macam kalau orang cakap 'eh kau tengok tak story dia ni?' so saya macam 'oh tengok, tau'. Saya dah tau jugak, bukan macam hmm saya taknak ambil tau lah. At least saya tau kalau dia cakap. Pastu kalau post ke saya memang scroll, and kalau dekat X, kebanyakannya memang saya akan scroll lama lah bukan tengok sekejap sekejap.

Interviewer: Kalau TikTok?

Participant: Kalau TikTok pun hm banyak saya scroll jugak, lama lah.

Interviewer: Ok, soalan seterusnya, *'How do posts about social gatherings, vacations, or achievements by others affect how you view your own experiences and choices?'*

Participant: Social gathering... Ini macam orang sekeliling ke, orang yang kita kenal ke, atau orang lain?

Interviewer: Hmm orang yang kita kenal

Participant: Ok contoh macam ada seseorang tu contoh kawan saya dia selalu pergi vacation kan, pastu saya tengok dia banyak post post pasal vacation. Saya jadi jealous, sebab saya tak dapat pergi kan. Tapi aa kalau macam achievement tu saya tak kisah la tu memang dia punya achievement. Tapi kalau macam social gathering, sesuatu social gathering tapi saya tak tau ataupun dia orang tak ajak saya, terus saya jadi macam agak marah, sebab macam kenapa tak ajak saya? Saya pun nak pergi jugak, saya suka benda ni jugak. Lebih-lebih lagi kalau diorang tau yang saya into benda tu.

Interviewer: Jadi selain perasaan marah ada perasaan...sedih ka? Atau overthinking? Sebab macam diorang tau saya minat benda ni tapi diorang tak tanya pun.

Participant: Haa tu pun ada jugak, perasaan tu, dia macam jadi kita terasa. Macam kenapa diorang tak nak ajak kita? Kenapa tak nak bagitau kan? Macam diorang tak suka kawan dengan kita ke? Haa dia jadi macam tu. Anxious kan.

Interviewer: Soalan seterusnya, *'In what ways does seeing others' online activities influence your decision-making, such as attending events or participating in trends?'*

Participant: Contoh?

Interviewer: Contoh let's say Syahirah... ok ada satu concert tapi Syahirah tidak kenal pun penyanyi tu tapi semua orang pergi. Jadi adakah Syahirah rasa obligated untuk datang jugak so Syahirah tidak miss apa-apa?

Participant: Ye. Dia macam sebab kalau dah macam majority nak pergi situ saya maybe akan pergi situ jugak. Sebab at least, kalau saya tak kenal pun itu maybe satu experience baru, maybe after that saya boleh kenal. At least kalau macam diorang nak cakap pasal benda tu saya tau jugak.

Interviewer: Jadi dia boleh kata rasa pressure ka untuk attend even tu?

Participant: Tak sangat kot, sebab saya memang suka jugak kalau macam keluar keluar kalau ada event ke, saya suka ja pergi. Kalau macam diorang ajak maybe saya boleh ja pergi.

Interviewer: Kalau let say time tu diorang pergi tapi Syahirah ada urusan. Jadi macam mana Syahirah deal dengan benda tu?

Participant: At least saya nak tengok diorang punya post. Saya nak tahu jugak macam mana event tu, apa yang diorang buat, haa.

Interviewer: Ok kita berpindah ke topic yang kedua, iaitu *Influence of FOMO on Emotional Well-Being*. Untuk soalan yang pertama, *'How do you feel when you miss out on social events or trending activities shared by others on social media?'*

Participant: Saya rasa anxious. Macam baru baru ni kan kalau raya kan ada buat velocity trend la apa la tu kan? Pastu walaupun macam saya tak ada orang nak buat sama-sama, tapi saya still belajar jugak benda tu. Pastu tiba-tiba masa raya, kawan saya ajak buat. Saya macam 'Oh, saya dah tau dah buat benda tu.'

Interviewer: Jadi kalau trends ni Syahirah sentiasa up to date la? Sentiasa keep up macam tu?

Participant: Haah

Interviewer: Let's say contoh Syahirah berkumpul pastu ada orang ajak buat trend velocity sebab velo kan ada banyak. Tapi yang diorang nak buat tu Syahirah tak tau. Jadi macam mana perasaan Syahirah?

Participant: Saya akan ada kat situ jugak, saya akan suruh orang tu ajar saya.

Interviewer: Ok, soalan kedua, *'Have you ever experienced emotional exhaustion or burnout from trying to stay constantly connected online? If so, can you share more about that?'*

Participant: Macam mana tu?

Interviewer: Dia macam, pernah tak Syahirah rasa burnout atau penat sebab Syahirah rasa obligated untuk stay online? Untuk up status atau keberadaan Syahirah? Atau.. pernah tak rasa penat sebab online platform?

Participant: Macam... too much information ke macam mana?

Interviewer: In apa apa way pun boleh

Participant: Maybe tak, setakat ni masih boleh lagi.

Interviewer: Soalan seterusnya, *'How often do you find yourself comparing your life to others online, and what emotional impact does this have on you?'*

Participant: Kalau macam scroll tu, Contoh yang macam saya bagi tadi yang dia pergi vacation ke kan, saya rasa hmm comparison tu selalu ada. Saya rasa tak adil. Dia boleh pergi tapi saya tak.

Interviewer: Oh tapi itu in terms of attending events lah kan. Macam mana pula kalau orang seumur kita yang beli kereta, bertunang, macam tu. Jadi macam mana dengan post macam tu?

Participant: Hmm kalau post macam tu saya ikut situation. Kalau ada a few situations macam ada kawan saya dah ada kereta tu saya jealous. Macam ok saya dah ada lesen tapi tak ada kereta pun. Kalau macam dari segi ada kawan saya dah kahwin, then baru baru ni saya tengok dia baru bercerai. Saya jadi macam ok yang tu saya tak jealous. Saya jadi lebih aware untuk enjoy my life dulu before ada relationship macam tu.

Interviewer: Ok, soalan yang terakhir untuk topik ni, *'Can you describe how FOMO impacts your overall mood and how long these feelings typically last?'*

Participant: Yang, how long typically last tu macam mana?

Interviewer: Dia macam, ok tadi Syahirah cakap in terms of comparison rasa sedih, anxious, angry, so berapa lama perasaan tu akan ada?

Participant: Actually bila saya dah rasa something wrong about sesuatu tu dia macam lama. Lama macam dia akan jadi satu event dalam diri saya. So saya memang akan ingat lah, benda tu lama, feelings tu tak sekejap. Kalau FOMO impact overall mood tu... bila kita nampak seseorang tu post yang macam contoh tadi attending event tu tapi saya tak ada, dia jadi... marah tu lama. Dia macam tak boleh terima hakikat.

Interviewer: Jadi ok let's say lah rasa marah dan anxious kan untuk masa yang lama, adakah dia akan bagi kesan kesan dalam bentuk fizikal macam mungkin isolate dulu kah, atau shaking, hilang selera makan macamtu?

Participant: Kalau cakap saya melepaskan kemarahan dengan barang boleh? Macam baling barang ke? Tumbuk bantal ke. Ada lepaskan kegeraman tu lah.

Interviewer: Tapi untuk tempoh tu dia tiada specific tempoh tapi dia lama lah? Dia tersemat di hati. Rasanya boleh sampai sebulan tak?

Participant: Lebih pun ada

Interviewer: Oh dia macam sentiasa ingat ingat ingat, macam memendam lah?

Participant: Haah macam tu

Interviewer: Baik, topik yang terakhir, *Coping Mechanisms for Handling FOMO*. Soalan yang pertama, *'What strategies have you developed to manage feelings of FOMO when they arise?'*

Participant: Meluah. Saya akan bagitau orang lain yang saya tak puas hati pasal benda tu.

Interviewer: Oh meluah? Kepada orang yang pergi ataupun kepada orang lain yang tak pergi?

Participant: Kawan lain yang tak pergi. At least ada orang dengar saya and saya tak pendam perkara tu sendiri.

Interviewer: Okay, soalan seterusnya, *'Are there any activities or habits that help you reduce the impact of FOMO?'* Selain daripada meluah, mungkin, ini contoh lah, brisk walk, atau macam yang orang selalu cakap, healing, jalan-jalan sendiri?

Participant: Saya tak berapa nak healing sangat, saya main game kot. If not saya macam stop sekejap daripada social media, saya pergi main game ke atau saya buat something crochet ke, mengait.

Interviewer: So main game dengan crochet ya, dah selalu buat atau jarang-jarang?

Participant: Boleh kata selalu, hari-hari

Interviewer: Adakah dia ni coping mechanism untuk FOMO ja ataupun everything. Macam benda buruk berlaku memang cope dengan cara tu

Participant: Haah untuk semua. Kalau macam FOMO ni kan kita boleh kait jugak macam orang tak ajak kita marah, kita sedih ka apa, kita distract diri kita kan.

Interviewer: Ok, soalan seterusnya, *'When do you feel the need to disconnect from social media, and how do you go about doing it?'*

Participant: Oh bila dengan family kot, dengan family saya jarang sikit nak scroll apa apa sebab kat rumah kita ada aktiviti lain. Kalau kat sini kan kita macam takda buat apa-apa. Bosan tu. Baru main social media la. Kalau kat rumah kurang.

Interviewer: Pernah tak ada satu point Syahirah rasa macam too much social media untuk haritu dan Syahirah decide untuk cut off dulu. Berhenti guna apa-apa social media dan buat benda lain?

Participant: Pernah. Cut off sekejap ja, macam beberapa jam je, tak lama lah.

Interviewer: Memang tak pernah sehari lah, memang beberapa jam ja?

Participant: Sebab macam contoh, dah cukup lah untuk harini, pastu saya tengok cerita lah kan. Pastu tiba-tiba, sekejap-sekejap nak tengok phone. At least bukak Whatsapp ke walaupun takda notification pun.

Interviewer: Jadi kalau Syahirah berhenti untuk beberapa jam tu apa yang Syahirah buat selain social media?

Participant: Macam tadi lah saya tengok cerita ke, main game ke, haa

Interviewer: Pernah tak ada situasi, contoh lah malam bila kita sudah di katil lepastu bukak tiktok cakap ‘ok satu video lagi’ lepastu tengok tengok dah jam 3 pagi.

Participant: Hmm selalu, awal-awal nak tengok video je, pastu ternampak trend, pastu kita nak belajar pulak trend tu. Pastu try beberapa kali, dia dah terlajak-lajak nak tidur.

Interviewer: Jadi adakah ini satu masalah untuk Syahirah?

Participant: Agaklah, dia macam jadi satu unfinished business tu. Macam cakap ‘eh nak belajar la trend ni’ tapi kita tak buat-buat, kita asyik terfikir ja.

Interviewer: So selagi tak buat memang trend tu akan melekat kat kepala lah?

Participant: Haah saya akan ajak kawan-kawan saya untuk buat hahaha

Interviewer: Ok, soalan yang keempat, *'What role does self-awareness play in managing your feelings of FOMO? How do you remind yourself to focus on your own experiences?'*

Participant: Hmm....

Interviewer: Ok contohlah saya bagi situasi, tadi kan kawan-kawan keluar tapi Syahirah di bilik, so macam mana Syahirah remind diri sendiri yang diorang, diorang lah, Syahirah, Syahirah.

Participant: Perasaan terasa tu still ada lah kan. Kalau saya maybe saya distract diri saya dengan buat benda lain lah kot. Saya macam tadi lah main game ke atau saya terus ja scroll. Tapi kalau diorang keluar mesti diorang post kat Instagram jadi saya tak akan buka Instagram. Saya akan buka TikTok ke, haa benda yang diorang tak ada.

Interviewer: So kalau in terms of achievement macam kereta or academic, adakah Syahirah akan beritahu diri sendiri yang masing-masing ada pace sendiri, masing-masing ada pathway sendiri. Jadi kita pun tak rasa terlalu di belakang.

Participant: Hmm ada, yang tu ada but still ada perasaan jealous. Tapi maybe saya akan macam saya nak lebih daripada orang tu.

Interviewer: Jadi dia macam bertukar kepada motivation? Macam tu?

Participant: Haah, dia macam jadi competitive, dia jadi silent competitive.

Interviewer: Rasa dia macam toxic positivity, terms dia. Bila kita jealous tapi dia motivate kita untuk work harder.

Participant: Haa macam tu lah... Toxic apa?

Interviewer: Toxic positivity, I think itu lah terms nya

Participant: Kena search ni, nampak tak? Tak boleh tertinggal Hahaha

Interviewer: Soalan yang kelima, *'How has your background/knowledge as counselling or psychology student influenced the way you respond to FOMO and manage the emotions/impacts that come with it?'* Sebab kita sebagai pelajar counseling and psychology kita belajar subjek macam basic helping skill, teori, jadi kita sudah diajar especially in coping mechanism kita sudah didedahkan dengan cara-cara untuk cope. Jadi macam mana apa yang Syahira belajar sepanjang tiga tahun ni membantu Syahirah cope with FOMO?

Participant: Kalau saya maybe saya buat confrontation kot. Counseling ni dia ajar yang confront tu better. Kita tau apa yang orang tu rasa, kita pun meluahkan apa yang kita rasa kat orang tu kan. Confront one by one tu. Macam hari tu pun saya pernah jugak, diorang keluar tanpa saya, saya marah tapi saya confront. At least diorang tahu saya marah, and saya pun tahu kenapa diorang tak ajak saya.

Interviewer: So memang biasa buat confrontation? Pernah tak rasa takut in certain situation?

Participant: Kalau sebelum ni maybe takut nak confront, tapi kaunseling ni memang kita kena dedah untuk jadi jujur kan. So kita kena berani untuk confront and defend diri kita sendiri.

Interviewer: So far confrontation memberikan impak yang positif lah? Pernah tak ia memutuskan silaturrahim?

Participant: Tak pernah. Tapi dia depends on orang jugak. Kalau sekarang ni saya dapat kawan yang macam open minded, yang positif, so benda tu ok. Untuk kawan yang tak open minded tu saya tak pernah cuba lagi.

Interviewer: Oh so Syahira tengok orang jugak. Mungkin sebab sekarang circle Syahirah pun pelajar kaunseling so masing-masing faham. Ok untuk soalan yang terakhir, '*How does FOMO affect your consumption habits?*'. Consumption habits ni dia macam trending bags, shoes, viral foods, et cetera.

Participant: Dia nak cakap teruk tak teruk sangat, dia tengok apa yang saya minat jugaklah. Kalau contoh in terms of beg Briks ke apa saya tak berapa minat tapi saya ikuti perkembangan. Saya akan tengok website tu ada beg apa, tapi saya tak nak beli pun. So bila orang cakap pasal beg Brik saya boleh jawab lah. Tapi kalau in terms of benda yang saya minat contohnya Kpop. Dia ada keluarkan lighstick baru, saya nak beli. So macam orang lain ada saya pun ada.

Interviewer: So kalau let's say habis stock tapi memang betul betul nak beli, tapi at the same time kawan yang minat group tu jugak dapat beli pastu dia show off.

Participant: Saya akan rasa jealous dengan dia, tapi saya akan lawan balik dengan benda lain pulak. Maybe dia takde album saya ada album.

Interviewer: Kalau recipe? Kan bulan puasa Khairul Aming ada keluarkan recipe then semua orang buat 'Saya buat tak jadi'. Kalau tu pernah try tak?

Participant: Pernah try tapi sendiri-sendiri ja, tak post lah.

Interviewer: Pernah tak Syahirah berbaris untuk beli sesuatu? Macam sanggup berbaris berjam-jam untuk beli benda viral?

Participant: Oh saya buka jenis macam tu, saya tak suka ramai. Kalau ramai walaupun benda tu viral dia macam ok takda rezeki kot, pergi tempat lain. Contoh kunafa Ojen kan orang beratur ramai, saya tak kan pergi yang tu. Saya akan pergi ke tempat lain yang tak ramai orang tapi still Kunafa.

Interviewer: Macam mana dengan battle online?

Participant: Haa kalau battle online yang takda orang, saya tak nampak orang tu saya masuk.

Interviewer: Oh ok. So itu merupakan soalan terakhir la. Jadi Syahirah ada apa apa soalan nak tanya saya?

Participant: Tak ada

Interviewer: Jadi I think itu saja untuk sesi kita pada hari ini, terima kasih kerana sudi meluangkan masa menghadiri interview ni. Thankyou!

Appendix F

Participant 1

Date & Time	FOMO Experience (How it occurred and what triggered It)	Impact on Emotional Well-being (Feelings, thoughts, reactions)	Coping Mechanism Used (Actions taken to manage FOMO)
15/4/2025	My aunty had a Raya open house, but I couldn't join sebab dah balik UNIMAS. Semua cousins ada...	Felt super FOMO tengok their pictures. I missed the family vibes, the food, and just being there with everyone. I felt a bit left out and homesick.	Texted my cousin to ask how it went, looked through old Raya pictures with them, and went out eat some nice food.
25/4/2025	My closest cousins celebrated one of their birthdays together. I couldn't be there (again) sebab I'm still here in UNIMAS.	Felt sad and a bit left out. I really wanted to be there – we're usually always together during birthdays.	Replied to their Insta stories with heart emojis, and FaceTimed one of them later to catch up. Tried to focus on my assignments to distract myself.

1/5/2025	Found out my best friend met up with another coursemate (who's also my friend) and didn't tell me.	I felt weird , like a mix of jealous and FOMO. Thought like "eh why didn't he ajak me too?" Made me overthink for a while.	tried not to take it personally. I reminded myself that people can have other friends too and it's okay.
13/5/2025	I was travelling and saw my fave DJ was performing in the same city. Tapi found out last minute and ticket mahal gila.	Felt FOMO tengok other people's posts from the event. I kept thinking "should've gone!" and regretted not knowing earlier	Tried to enjoy the rest of my trip, played his songs on Spotify, and told myself there'll be another chance next time.

Participant 2

Date & Time	FOMO Experience (How it occurred and what triggered It)	Impact on Emotional Well-being (Feelings, thoughts, reactions)	Coping Mechanism Used (Actions taken to manage FOMO)
13/4/2025	A friend went to visit matriculation for an annual drone competition closing ceremony. I wanted to go to meet the pilots and join the ceremony, but I had a family occasion that I couldn't skip. Hence, I did not go to visit the matriculation.	I was sad that I couldn't join because I have been missing my matriculation time and the drone competition is an annual event, which means I'll only be seeing the pilots once a year.	Rationalized my sad feelings as I couldn't join the event due to my own reason. Hence, I managed to rationalize my feelings.
16/4/2025	My friends went to Raya visiting to one of our friends house. However, I couldn't join as I was going back to my village.	I felt sad as I couldn't join because I haven't been to any visits this year.	I tried distracting myself from seeing their posts on social medias.

22/4/2025	My housemates were having chicken rice for dinner. I couldn't join them as I was still in the village.	I just felt left out. I had a thought like "I wished I was there to together with them".	Rationalized my feelings as I was also at home together with my family.
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Participant 3

Date & Time	FOMO Experience (How it occurred and what triggered It)	Impact on Emotional Well-being (Feelings, thoughts, reactions)	Coping Mechanism Used (Actions taken to manage FOMO)
17 April 2025	Saya ternampak kawan saya memuat naik 'story' di Instagram dimana dia pergi ke Korea Selatan untuk bercuti	Saya berasa cemburu dan sedih kerana saya tidak mendapat peluang untuk kesana juga	Saya cuba merancang bersama kawan-kawan saya untuk ke sana bersama-sama suatu hari nanti.
28 May 2025	Saya telah mengikuti pertandingan syarahan bahasa Jepun, tetapi saya tidak memenangi pertandingan tersebut. Jadi, saya bertanya kepada semua pemenang tentang latar belakang mereka. Saya rasa tercabar dengan kehebatan mereka dan mempunyai sifat untuk tahu tentang bagaimana mereka boleh	Perasaan sedih mula wujud kerana saya hanya mendapat saguhati. Saya juga mula merendahkan diri saya kerana tidak mahir seperti orang lain.	Selepas mengetahui latar belakang mereka yang rata-rata tidak asing dengan budaya Jepun, saya cuba untuk mencabar diri saya untuk menjadi hebat seperti mereka juga.

	menjadi lancar dalam bahasa jepun		
9 Jun 2025	Saya melihat berita mengenai kemalangan yang melibatkan bas yang membawa pelajar UPSI dan terdapat 15 pelajar yang terkorban. Saya berasa tetap ingin tahu tentang berita tersebut sehingga saya menonton semua video di aplikasi 'TikTok' seharian. Saya mahu menjadi yang paling mengambil tahu isu tersebut dalam kalangan rakan-rakan saya.	Saya berasa sedih dan simpati jadi saya sentiasa ambil perkembangan	Untuk mengelakkan perasaan sedih berlebihan, saya memilih untuk tidak melihat aplikasi 'TikTok' selama 1 Hari dan memilih untuk melangkau video-video yang menyedihkan

Participant 4

Date & Time	FOMO Experience (How it occurred and what triggered It)	Impact on Emotional Well-being (Feelings, thoughts, reactions)	Coping Mechanism Used (Actions taken to manage FOMO)
26 April	Video penganiayaan kucing tular di Tiktok menyebabkan saya marah dan kecewa. Saya habiskan hampir dua jam membaca komen dan berkongsi semula kandungan tersebut.	Saya sangat emosi dan mula hilang fokus terhadap kerja harian saya kerana terlalul marah dan sedih.	Saya memilih untuk menyekat akaun yang menyebarkan kandungan berikutan dan melaporkannya. Saya juga mula mengikuti akaun yang menyebarkan mesej positif dan pendidikan tentang haiwan.
10 Mei	Saya sering nampak influencer memuat naik pencapaian mereka, membeli barangan mahal dan melancong ke luar negara, disukai ramai. Ia membuat saya mula membandingkan diri saya dengan mereka.	Saya rasa tidak cukup bagus, rendah diri dan kecewa dengan diri sendiri. Saya mula mempersoalkan keputusan dan perjalanan hidup saya sebagai seorang pelajar.	Saya mengambil masa untuk log keluar daripada media sosial selama dua hari. Saya fokus pada jurnal syukur dan refleksi diri untuk menghargai perjalanan saya sendiri.

21 Mei	Saya melihat kawan saya memuat naik gambar dia membeli telefon bimbit baru yang terkini di Instagram. Dalam masa yang sama, saya sedang berjimat untuk keperluan lain.	Saya berasa cemburu dan iri hati. Saya mula mempersoalkan kenapa saya tidak mampu seperti mereka. Saya juga nula rasa kurang bersemangat dengan kehidupan saya.	Saya sedar perasaan itu tidak membantu. Jadi saya menulis senarai pencapaian kecil diri sendiri. Saya mula fokus pada matlamat kewangan saya dan belajar bersyukur dengan apa yang saya ada.
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Participant 5

Date & Time	FOMO Experience (How it occurred and what triggered It)	Impact on Emotional Well-being (Feelings, thoughts, reactions)	Coping Mechanism Used (Actions taken to manage FOMO)
8 th of May 2025 02.47 p.m.	The latest event for the game just ended and it was so good. It got me looking forward to the next one. And searching about the upcoming prediction for the next events.	Excited because the latest event was so good that it literally got me into high hopes searching and reading about the possible upcoming predictions for events.	Time management. I put a timer as time out for this 'research' I was doing. And when the timer went off, it means break time and I would move to other tasks. It was horrible at that time but I suppose it is a good progress to cut myself the indulgence.

23rd of May 2025 11.37 p.m.	There is a new event upcoming in the game and I just cannot help checking it out. I saw the trailer on TikTok and I just had to see it.	Curiosity, of course. After watching it, there was just 'Oh' in my mind and nothing really memorable for me. But I would like to think that it does not really bug me out as much as it did before. I am not sure the exact reason for that as of now but I'll be keeping an eye out on my progress to manage this FOMO.	After watching the trailer, I did talk about it few times with some of my friends. I did keep it to surface level chat because we do not want to get ahead of ourselves with the chattiness about new trends in the game for a long time.
1st of June 2025 6.11 p.m.	I have been checking on the application and the social media for the game a lot of times. I think it's partly because I am trying to distract myself or take some time off from socialising with checking the update for the game. Especially because one event that I have been looking forward to for the game is approaching.	It gives me a bit of a happiness at least for a while because I have been stressed out for some time. And checking over the game, at least for this month is not because of having the need to know everything, but because I need some	Though while I indulged in this, I did not spend more than 2 hours for the application, and honestly it is a major update from before. Kudos to me!

		time off from the world for a while.	
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Participant 6

Date & Time	FOMO Experience (How it occurred and what triggered It)	Impact on Emotional Well-being (Feelings, thoughts, reactions)	Coping Mechanism Used (Actions taken to manage FOMO)
20 May 2025, 9:00 PM	While scrolling through Instagram, I saw several friends from other faculties posting about a career talk event with a famous guest speaker. I wasn't aware of the event beforehand.	I felt left out and slightly anxious, thinking I missed out on something valuable. I questioned my own awareness and felt a bit behind compared to others.	I reminded myself that I had academic responsibilities that day. I later checked with a friend for future event updates and followed relevant pages to stay informed.
29 May 2025, 10.00 AM	My classmate posted pictures of a study group I was not invited to. It made me wonder if I was excluded intentionally.	I felt a sense of rejection and self-doubt. I started to overthink about my relationships and whether I was not liked by the group.	I reflected on my own availability and realized I had been busy lately. I initiated a casual conversation with one member to reconnect and express interest in future group sessions.

5 June 2025, 5.00 PM	I saw stories of friends relaxing at a café after submitting their thesis early, while I was still editing mine.	I felt pressure and some guilt for not being as fast. It triggered feelings of inadequacy.	I restructured my schedule to manage my time better and practiced self-compassion by acknowledging everyone has their own pace. I also planned a small reward for myself after submission.
13 June 2025, 12.00 PM	I saw a group photo on WhatsApp of my close friends hanging out at the mall. I wasn't informed or invited to join them.	I felt disappointed and a little hurt. I started to question whether I had done something wrong or was being left out on purpose. There was a sense of loneliness and overthinking.	I reminded myself that maybe it was a spontaneous outing or a small group plan. Instead of assuming, I reached out casually in the group chat. Later, I treated myself to some online shopping as a way to lift my mood.