



English As Foreign Language (EFL) Students' Experiences with Fear of Missing Out (FoMo) in Batanghari Regency: A Study of Students' Perspectives

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Abstract

The rise of technology has significantly improved interpersonal communication, enabling users to share their luxurious lifestyles and experiences easily. For young generation, particularly EFL students, English has evolved into more than just a communicative tool; it has become an expression of emotional intelligence. This trend has led to a phenomenon known as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), which describes the anxiety of missing experiences or information that enhances social life. This study aimed to investigate the EFL students' experiences regarding FOMO, trends influenced their FOMO and their strategies to avoid its effects. This research employed both quantitative surveys with a Likert scale and qualitative with interviews. The survey sample included EFL students in Batang Hari, who provided insights into their experiences through 13 questionnaire statements. Findings reveal that FOMO significantly influences students, particularly regarding their English competencies, contributing to over 45% of their strong feelings of anxiety. Other factors, such as having sophisticated gadgets, discovering new dining spots, and listening to popular music, have a moderate impact on their FOMO, accounting for 25-44%. In contrast, luxury items and fashion have a lesser impact, contributing less than 25%. Despite the pressures associated with FOMO, the overall effect is primarily positive, motivating students to improve their English skills. Based on interview data, students revealed that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) affects their motivation to learn English. Two students mentioned that they are more proactive in seeking out suitable courses or applications to enhance their English skills. One student expressed feelings of discomfort and anxiety due to FOMO, as they felt pressured by a friend's high proficiency in English, which they believed they could not match due to economic constraints.

Keywords: *EFL Students experiences; Fear of Missing out; Students Perspectives*

Introduction

The growth of technology has significantly reshaped interpersonal communication and social interaction between society. It facilitates them to exchange of personal information regarding luxuries possessions, moments and lifestyles, without considering how this might affect others' lives, both positively and negatively. This lack of consideration can impact their happiness and sadness based on how society responds. Its seamless dissemination of information has engendered both advantageous and detrimental societal ramifications. Social media platforms enable users to broadcast their daily routines, accomplishments, and experiences, fostering an environment of continuous

engagement. This connectivity has engendered the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO refers to the anxiety or apprehension people feel when they believe others are having more fulfilling experiences than they are (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018). It is defined as the psychological distress individuals experience when they perceive that others are engaging in more rewarding experiences. Introduced by McGinnis (2004), this term highlights the influence of social media, particularly through the actions of influencers, on societal behaviour. This fear can lead to a range of negative consequences, including decreased academic performance, social isolation, and decreased mental well-being (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Further research by Przybylski (2013) investigated how FOMO manifests in student behaviour and motivation. Additionally, these students participate in various cultural and social activities from other countries, which further contributes to their experiences. Research has shown that social media platforms can intensify feelings of inadequacy and anxiety, leading to increased FOMO among users (Hunt et al., 2018). This phenomenon is especially relevant for students, who are in a transitional stage of life marked by social comparison and peer influence (Dewall et al., 2011). The constant need to stay connected, along with the fear of missing out on social events or important information, can lead to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and heightened stress levels.

In physiological effect, FOMO can create a sense of isolation and disconnection among EFL students. Despite being constantly connected, students may feel lonely and disconnected from their peers and instructors, leading to a lack of meaningful relationships and a sense of community. So, investigating this phenomenon among EFL students can provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers. By understanding the causes and consequences of FOMO, educators can develop targeted strategies to mitigate its negative effects, such as incorporating digital literacy skills into the curriculum, promoting healthy technology use habits, and fostering a sense of community and connection among students. In conclusion, investigating the FOMO phenomenon among EFL students is essential to understand its impact on their academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being. By exploring the causes and consequences of FOMO, educators and policymakers can develop effective strategies to support EFL students in navigating the challenges of the digital age and achieving academic success. Especially for EFL students in rural areas often face unique challenges, including limited access to resources, infrastructure, and opportunities. EFL students in rural areas may be particularly vulnerable to FOMO, as they may feel disconnected from their peers and the wider world.

Usage social media is associated with several negative consequences, such as low language achievement, high foreign language anxiety level, high academic burnout, and negative aspects of perfectionism (Shu, 2023). EFL students may feel overwhelmed by the pressure to stay connected and up-to-date with their peers, leading to distractions and decreased focus on their studies. This can result in lower grades, decreased academic satisfaction, and a higher likelihood of dropping out. Students

who frequently experience FOMO may prioritize social activities over their studies, leading to poorer academic outcomes (Eisenberger et al., 2011).

In a study by Milyavskaya et al. (2019), it was found that high levels of FOMO correlate with lower academic motivation and engagement, particularly among college students. Thus, it can hinder EFL students' ability to develop essential skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and time management. By constantly being connected to their devices, students may rely too heavily on technology and neglect the development of these crucial skills, which are essential for academic success and future career prospects. In the other hand, Mallari, et al. (2023) found that it no significant correlation between FOMO and academic performance, which means that feeling left out was not associated with how students performed academically, after pandemic covid-19. Furthermore, this research investigated the students' experiences with FOMO, the trends influencing their FOMO, and the strategies they used to address the effects. It assessed the impact of FOMO on the students' academic.

Research Methodology

This research used combination technique for data collection and analysis, blending numerical data, and personal narratives. The study applied purposive sampling, the technique defined by Creswell (2014) as the intentional selection of individuals and locations to gain a deeper understanding of a specific information, and further elaborated by Sugiyono (2018) as a technique that involves choosing samples based on particular criteria. The researcher utilized a questionnaire to assess students' experiences related to the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). The participant indicated their experiences by scaling it on a Likert scale. A questionnaire was administered to all students in the Tadris Bahasa Inggris program. The sample included all of EFL students from Batang Hari, there were 24 EFL students in Batang Hari, comprising 13 questions about their experiences of FOMO, the trends that influenced their FOMO, and strategies to address the negative effects of FOMO. They answered the questionnaire in online form using Google Form. It sent to the students by personally chat messages. The questions modified from Przybylski et al. (2013). The questionnaire used as preliminary research, before interview, as the basic data to choose respondent for being interviewee. The researcher analysed the data in statistic descriptive, to detected the student with FOMO experiences. The questionnaire had five scale for the questionnaire, they were *Strongly agreed, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly disagree*. They measured the scale for these statements:

Furthermore, the researcher identified three participants for interviews to obtain a more profound understanding of their experiences with FOMO, their strategies for mitigating its effects, and the impact of FOMO on their academic performance. The three students chosen was because they had experiences with FOMO. This approach helps acquire comprehensive data and enriches the research findings, as it is anticipated that informants will provide detailed and insightful information.

The interview technique was selected based on the accessibility of participants, cost considerations, and time constraints (Creswell, 2014). Direct interview was conducted to ensure clarity of information and to minimize misunderstandings. The researcher analysed the survey responses using descriptive statistics to measure the students' experiences and the trends data. These interviews were performed in a semi-structured format, incorporating open-ended questions to elicit detailed and nuanced responses about their experiences with FOMO. The sessions were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Findings and Discussion,

Findings

Questionnaire

The students returned questionnaire that had been given by researcher were students that active in English study in academic year 2024. The respondent experienced FoMo 95,83%. In the survey conducted, a total of 24 respondents participated, comprising 8 males and 16 females. The respondents were 14 students from the first semester, 3 students from the third semester, 3 students from the fifth semester, and 4 students from the seventh semester. They stated that their English learning experiences started from elementary school 42%, Junior high school or boarding school 46% and senior high school 12%. The age distribution among the participants varied, with 11 individuals aged between 18 and 19, 6 between 20 and 21, 4 between 22 and 23, 2 between 24 and 25, and 1 participant aged 28 to 29. The findings also revealed that the majority of respondents, 23 in total, experienced feelings of FoMo (Fear of Missing Out), while only 1 individual reported being unexperienced with this sensation.

From the data, EFL students in Batang Hari in generation Z (genZ) category. Gruber (2019) mentioned GenZ as “digital native” generation because they grow up with internet access and portable digital technology. McCrindle provided detailed look at the characteristic of GenZ. They are open-minded, communicative, tolerant, risk-taker, involved, transparent, dependents on support, ambitious, technology users, multitasker, flexible, creative, unrealistic wage of expectation and resistant to standard procedures (McCrindle, 2017). To effectively engage this generation, teachers must adjust their teaching methods to align with the unique characteristics and learning styles of today's students.

Table 1*Statements of questionnaire*

No	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	My friend told me about his/her interesting experience studying an English course, I will follow up to register in there.	46%	17%	4%	13%	21%
2	My friend has the newest gadget for learning English. I will find my way to have it.	29%	21%	4%	13%	33%
3	My friend used an application for learning English skills. I also have it.	50%	8%	4%	4%	33%
4	I will ask my friend's opinion before buying a thing.	8%	38%	4%	42%	8%
5	I feel something is missing if I am not trying a new cuisine that my friend tasted.	29%	33%	13%	21%	4%
6	When there is a new model in fashion. I also have it. I am never behind in fashion.	8%	33%	21%	21%	17%
7	I feel like something is missing if I don't have the currently trending novels.	8%	13%	13%	25%	42%
8	I feel strange if there are people who don't know the new music or song that is currently popular.	38%	25%	17%	8%	13%
9	I always update myself about the latest news about the artists that I like.	8%	29%	25%	21%	17%
10	I am the first who know about new destinations for healing in my area.	13%	17%	17%	38%	17%
11	I feel left behind if I never try the new games which are trending today.	17%	25%	25%	21%	13%
12	I feel sad if I haven't watched a movie that my friend has watched.	29%	38%	17%	8%	8%
13	I always see my friend's social media, to know their activity.	54%	21%	8%	13%	4%

From the data showed, FOMO significantly influences students, particularly regarding their English competencies, contributing to over 45% of their strong feelings of anxiety. Other factors, such as having sophisticated gadgets, discovering new dining spots, and listening to popular music, have a moderate impact on their FOMO, accounting for 25-44%. In contrast, luxury items and fashion have a lesser impact, contributing less than 25%. Despite the pressures associated with FOMO, the overall effect is primarily positive, motivating students to improve their English skills. After showing the data, the researcher selected 3 students to interview to obtain deep information about their experiences with the Fear of Missing Out.

Interview

The interviews conducted with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students revealed insights about their experiences with Fear of Missing Out (FoMo) when comparing their learning platforms to those of their more academically accomplished peers. Participants expressed feelings of

inadequacy when they were unable to replicate the same learning processes or access the same applications utilized by the top-performing students in their classes. In contrast, one interviewee indicated a preference for selecting resources based on personal needs and budget rather than emulating the choices of high-achieving students. Regarding the latest technological devices, students demonstrated a disinterest in pursuing the prestige associated with owning expensive or cutting-edge mobile phones and gadgets. While they were aware of new technology releases through online sources or peer discussions, they consciously chose to forgo the desire to possess such items. Many students also recognized that, within rural contexts, these devices hold limited importance, particularly considering the challenges they would face in terms of maintenance and repair when such resources become damaged. Similarly, novels did not emerge as a popular topic of interest among EFL students in Batang Hari. The absence of bookstores and promotional materials in their vicinity contributed to their limited engagement with literature. Students noted that they primarily encountered novels in digital formats, such as PDFs, and relied on library resources for reading. Novels rarely became subjects of conversation in their daily lives, and access to physical books was often limited due to the need to travel to the city for purchases. In contrast, topics such as music, films, cuisine, and mobile applications were actively discussed within their social circles, highlighting a vibrant exchange of information regarding the latest trends and popular culture among them.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that a significant proportion of EFL students in Batang Hari, primarily from Generation Z, experience a pronounced Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) related to their social lives. The survey data clearly illustrates the powerful social influences and feelings of belonging that individuals experience in relation to various interests, including education, technology, fashion, cuisine, literature, music, entertainment, and games. The break of findings are as follows:

1. Impression friends on Learning, a significant 46% strongly agree that recommendations from friends regarding English courses are critical in their decision-making, while 50% actively use an app recommended by their peers.
2. Lust for Modern Gadgets, interest in having the latest learning gadgets is notably low, with only 29% strongly agreeing on the matter.
3. Cuisine and Experiences, there is a distinct enthusiasm for new culinary experiences, as 62% feel a strong void when they miss out on trying new cuisines that their friends enjoy.
4. Fashion and Trends, only 8% strongly assert they keep up with the newest fashion trends, suggesting that peer influence in this area is minimal.
5. Literature and Entertainment, a notable 42% feel disconnected if they do not read currently trending novels, and 29% express sadness over not having seen a movie their friends have watched.

6. Music and Cultural Awareness, a significant 38% feel out of place if others are unaware of current music hits, underscoring the importance of shared cultural references for social bonding.
7. Social Media Engagement, a striking 54% consistently check their friends' social media to stay informed, highlighting its essential role in maintaining connections.

In summary, the data highlights the significant impact of social validation, belonging, and peer influence, especially in educational pursuits and cultural engagement. The interviews revealed that students prefer to make consumer choices based on their needs and budgets. They tend to follow trends when they believe it is essential to improve their academic performance. Additionally, they manage their fear of missing out (FOMO) by critically assessing their learning needs.

Conclusion and Suggestion

This study contributes to the expanding of research on the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and its effects on individuals, particularly English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Indonesia. The study underscores the profound impact of social dynamics on the lives of EFL students in Batang Hari, particularly those from Generation Z. The findings reveal that peer influence significantly shapes students' educational choices, social interactions, and cultural engagement. While the desire for modern gadgets remains low, the enthusiasm for culinary experiences and cultural trends highlights the importance of shared interests in fostering belonging and social connections. Furthermore, the reliance on social media to stay informed indicates a critical channel for maintaining relationships. Ultimately, while FOMO is a real challenge for many students, it appears that they navigate this by aligning their consumer choices with personal needs and educational goals, reflecting a more thoughtful approach to their social experiences. This insight can inform educators and stakeholders seeking to support students in balancing their social influences with their individual aspirations.

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