

The Impact of FoMO and TikTok Addiction Among Emerging Adults in Indonesia: A Social Psychological Analysis

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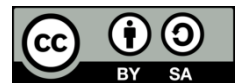
Keywords:

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)
TikTok addiction
Emerging adults
Social media
Psychological well-being

ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on TikTok addiction among emerging adults (18-25 years) in Indonesia. The research employs a quantitative approach with data collected from 105 participants through online questionnaires. Using the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS) and TikTok addiction Scale (SMAS), the study finds a significant positive relationship between FoMO and TikTok addiction, with FoMO contributing 70.4% to TikTok addiction variability ($R^2=0.704$, $p<.001$). Results reveal that 63.81% of participants spend 4-5 hours daily on TikTok, primarily viewing updates (73.3%), with fashion, culinary, and travel content most preferred. The findings suggest that the higher the level of FoMO, the greater the addiction tendency to TikTok. This research addresses a notable gap in understanding how FoMO specifically influences TikTok addiction among emerging adults, providing valuable insights for developing targeted interventions aimed at promoting healthier social media usage patterns in this vulnerable demographic group.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The transition from adolescence to adulthood, known as emerging adulthood, represents a critical developmental period characterized by identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and optimism [1]. During this phase, individuals are tasked with establishing close relationships, setting commitments and goals, and beginning to build families [2]. However, the rapid digitalization of society, particularly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has significantly altered how emerging adults navigate these developmental tasks, with social media playing an increasingly central role in their daily experiences.

In Indonesia's collectivist culture, which emphasizes social harmony and conformity, social media has become an essential platform for emerging adults to construct their social identities. The need to remain connected and accepted within social groups is especially pronounced in collectivist societies, where group affiliation and social status are highly valued. This phenomenon aligns with Social Identity Theory, which explains how individuals identify as part of specific social groups and strive to maintain positive images through social comparison [3].

TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential social media platforms globally, surpassing Google as the most popular website in 2021 [4]. In Indonesia, TikTok usage has grown exponentially, with 157.6 million users as of July 2024, making Indonesia the country with the most extensive TikTok user base worldwide, surpassing even the United States [5]. This platform allows users to create and share short videos ranging from 2 to 60 seconds, with recent updates extending this to 3 minutes [6]. The popularity of TikTok among emerging adults raises concerns about potential addiction, particularly as this age group constitutes 32.3% of social media users in Indonesia [7].

The pervasive use of social platforms like TikTok represents a significant context in which emerging adults navigate fundamental social psychological processes. While often characterized as "addiction," excessive social media engagement more accurately reflects underlying social psychological mechanisms of identity formation, social comparison, and belongingness needs. Individuals demonstrating intensive platform usage often exhibit behaviors driven by core social motivations: the need for social validation, fear

of social exclusion, and identity affirmation through peer relationships [8, 9].

Self-Determination Theory offers a framework for understanding how basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness influence individuals' motivation to use social media [10]. The need for social relatedness may be particularly salient in Indonesia due to collectivist values that emphasize harmony and connectedness with others. When these needs are not fulfilled in face-to-face interactions, emerging adults may turn to platforms like TikTok to satisfy their basic psychological needs.

Among the various social psychological factors influencing platform engagement patterns, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has emerged as a particularly significant predictor [11]. FoMO represents "a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing" [12]. This phenomenon is fundamentally a social psychological construct rooted in social comparison processes, belongingness needs, and identity validation through social feedback. For emerging adults, who are developmentally navigating identity formation and social positioning, FoMO manifests as a heightened sensitivity to perceived social exclusion and intensified social comparison behaviors [13].

Previous research has established correlations between FoMO and TikTok addiction on platforms like Instagram [14], with studies indicating that FoMO contributes approximately 34.1% to TikTok addiction among young adult women [15]. However, there remains a gap in understanding how FoMO specifically influences TikTok addiction among emerging adults, regardless of gender, particularly in the Indonesian context where TikTok has achieved unprecedented popularity.

The current study addresses this research gap by investigating the impact of FoMO on TikTok addiction among emerging adults in Indonesia. Unlike previous studies that have often focused on specific genders or included additional variables such as loneliness [16], this research examines the direct relationship between FoMO and TikTok addiction across the emerging adult population. The findings of this research contribute significant theoretical benefits,

particularly to the fields of developmental psychology and social psychology. From a developmental psychology perspective, this study enhances our understanding of how emerging adults navigate identity formation and social belongingness needs during a critical transitional period characterized by exploration and instability.

The research illuminates how digital social contexts have become integrated into developmental processes traditionally observed in face-to-face interactions. From a social psychology standpoint, the study advances theoretical understanding of how social comparison processes, belongingness needs, and social identity formation operate in contemporary social environments. By establishing the substantial influence of FoMO on platform engagement patterns, this research expands social psychological theories of interpersonal relationships, group belonging, and social comparison to encompass digital social contexts. These contributions offer valuable foundations for future research examining the intersection of developmental trajectories and social psychological processes in emerging adulthood, moving beyond simplistic media effects models to a more nuanced understanding of how fundamental social needs manifest in digital environments.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative non-experimental design to examine the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on TikTok addiction among emerging adults. The non-experimental approach was selected because the phenomena being studied have already occurred naturally without researcher manipulation [15]. Specifically, this research utilized a correlational design, also known as ex-post facto or “after the fact” design, which aims to determine how existing variables interact and examine the relationship between independent and dependent variables [16].

The research adopted an associative quantitative approach through survey methodology, using adapted scales relevant to the research topic. This approach is appropriate when the research aims to understand causal relationships between variables [17]. The independent variable in this study was Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), while the dependent variable was TikTok addiction, focused explicitly on TikTok usage.

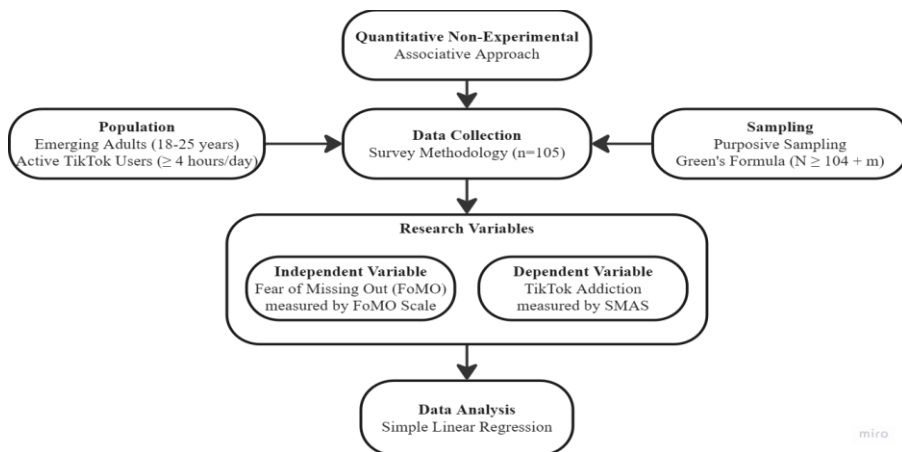


Figure 1. Research Design Flowchart

2.2 Variables and Operational Definitions

2.2.1 Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)

FoMO is operationally defined as the apprehension or anxiety that occurs when individuals fear missing information or events. In this digital era, FoMO reflects the perceived need to keep up with technological developments [12]. This variable was measured using a unidimensional scale containing ten statement items regarding FoMO. Higher scores indicate stronger FoMO tendencies in individuals.

2.2.2 TikTok Addiction

TikTok addiction is operationally defined as spending excessive time on the TikTok platform with a tendency to constantly seek immediate information, which can result in virtual tolerance, communication issues, and virtual problems [11]. The indicators used to measure TikTok addiction include virtual tolerance, virtual communication, virtual problems, and virtual information. Higher scores on this scale indicate a more substantial individual involvement with TikTok, suggesting addiction tendencies.

2.3 Research Instruments

2.3.1 Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS)

This study measured FoMO using the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS) developed by Przybylski et al. [12]. This scale conceptualizes FoMO as a unidimensional construct encompassing

fears and anxieties when disconnected from others or believing others are enjoying their activities more fully. The scale contains 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). An example item states, “I fear others have more rewarding experiences than I.” Higher FoMO scores indicate a greater tendency to check mobile phones to learn about peers’ activities.

Table 1. Blueprint of FoMo

Dimension	Favourable Items	Unfavourable Items	Total Items
FoMO	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10		10
Total			10

2.3.2 Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS)

The Social Media Addiction Scale-Student Form, developed by Şahin [9], was used to measure TikTok addiction. This scale was designed to assess addiction levels among young social media users. It consists of 29 items across four dimensions: virtual tolerance (VT), virtual communication (VC), virtual problem (VP), and virtual information (VI). All items are positively worded and rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 2. Blueprint of TikTok Addiction Scale

No	Dimension	Favorable Items	Unfavorable Items	Total Items
1	Virtual Tolerance	1, 2, 3, 4, 5		5
2	Virtual Communication	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16		11
3	Virtual Problem	17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23		7
4	Virtual Information	24,25,26,27,28,29		6
			Total	29

Virtual tolerance refers to the increasing need to use social media to achieve the same satisfaction, similar to tolerance in other behavioral addictions. Virtual communication encompasses preferences for online interactions over face-to-face communication. Virtual problems refer to the negative consequences of social media use, including disruptions to academic or professional activities. Virtual information relates to the unhealthy need to update information on social media platforms constantly.

2.4 Research Procedure

Data collection utilized questionnaires distributed to TikTok users. According to Sugiyono [18], questionnaires are a data collection method employing a series of written statements or questions to determine respondents' responses. The questionnaires were distributed via Google Forms. Before distribution, the researchers translated the scale items into Indonesian and adapted them to the research context. The translated instruments underwent content validity assessment through expert judgment.

The scale adaptation process involved several stages. First, researchers proficient in both languages translated the scale from English to Indonesian. Then, a psychology expert with experience in social media research and developmental psychology examined the translation results.

As an appreciation for participation, researchers rewarded participants who completed the forms. Before participants proceeded to the items, brief instructions regarding completion procedures were provided at the beginning. Rewards were distributed through a random drawing of participants' phone numbers.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

This research applied ethical principles of psychological research. All participants provided written informed consent before participating. They were informed about the research purpose, procedures, potential risks, and the right to withdraw without negative consequences. Data confidentiality was guaranteed, and participant identities were protected by using numerical codes.

Although incentives were offered, the nominal value of rewards was limited to avoid potential coercion.

2.6 Population and Sampling

The population for this study consisted of emerging adults with the following characteristics: aged 18-25 years, active TikTok users who spend four or more hours daily on the application, and willing to participate in the research. The population is a comprehensive group of specific elements, such as people or objects, sharing common characteristics determined by the researcher's sampling criteria.

The 4-hour daily TikTok usage criterion was selected based on previous research indicating that this duration represents a threshold for problematic use among emerging adults [39]. Margaretha and Wati [28] found that TikTok usage exceeding 60-120 minutes per day tends to indicate problematic social media use. By setting the 4-hour threshold, this research focuses on heavy users who are at higher risk of experiencing addiction.

Participant selection employed a purposive sampling methodology. Sugiyono [18] states that purposive sampling requires special considerations. Based on the size and composition of a population, this strategy was deemed appropriate for quantitative research.

The sample size was determined using Green's formula [21]: $N \geq 104 + m$, where m represents the number of independent variables. Thus, $N \geq 104 + 1 = 105$. Consequently, the researchers established a minimum sample size of 105 participants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we present the results of our investigation into the impact of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on TikTok addiction among emerging adults who use TikTok. The results include demographic data, reliability and validity testing of the measurement instruments, and hypothesis testing, followed by a comprehensive discussion of the findings.

3.1. Demographic Characteristics

Data collection was conducted through online questionnaires distributed via social media, with 105 participants.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze respondent characteristics, with the distribution as follows:

Table 3 shows the gender distribution of participants, with females comprising the majority (63 participants or 60%), while males accounted for 40% (42 participants). The predominance of females in the sample is consistent with TikTok usage trends in Indonesia, where the platform is more popular among female users. Previous research has indicated that females tend to be more vulnerable to FoMO [14], which may partly explain the high female participation rate in this study.

Table 3. Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	42	40%
Female	63	60%
Total	105	100%

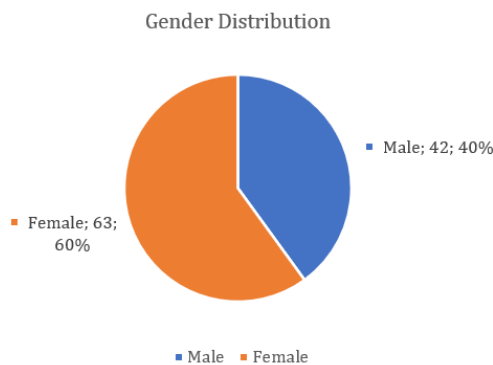


Figure 2. Gender Distribution

The age distribution in Table 4 indicates that the 20-21 age group was most dominant, with 54 participants (51.43%), while the 18-19 age group had the lowest representation with only 7 participants (6.67%). This reflects the general demographic distribution of TikTok users in Indonesia, where the 20-21 age group represents a rapidly growing segment [7]. From a developmental perspective, ages 20-21 represent a crucial transitional stage in emerging adulthood, where individuals often experience heightened identity uncertainty and social comparison, which may contribute to higher levels of FoMO.

Table 4. Age Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-19 years	7	6.67%
20-21 years	54	51.43%
22-23 years	22	20.95%
24-25 years	22	20.95%
Total	105	100%

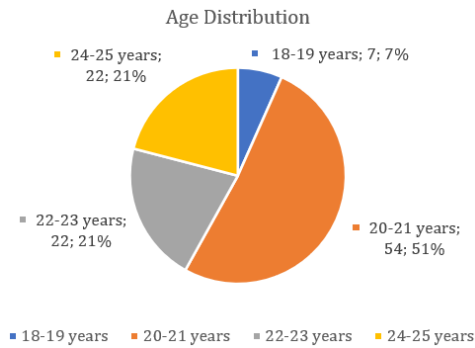
**Figure 3.** Age Distribution

Table 5 presents the daily TikTok usage duration, with most participants (67 or 63.81%) using TikTok for 4-5 hours daily. Only one participant (0.95%) reported using TikTok for more than 9 hours daily. According to Margaretha and Wati [28], TikTok usage exceeding 60-120 minutes per day tends to indicate problematic social media use. This high usage level may reflect efforts to fulfill fundamental social needs for connection and identity validation.

Table 5. Daily TikTok Usage Duration

Daily Usage	Frequency	Percentage
4-5 hours	67	63.81%
6-7 hours	33	31.43%
8-9 hours	4	3.81%
More than 9 hours	1	0.95%
Total	105	100%

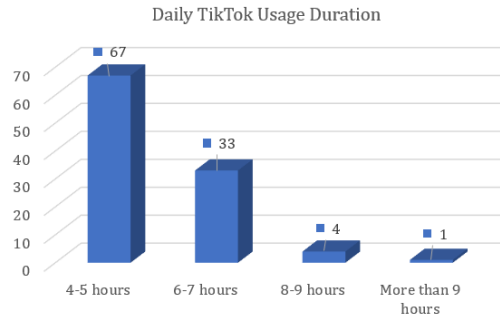


Figure 4. Daily TikTok Usage Duration

Regarding activities performed on TikTok (Table 6), viewing updates or latest information was the most common activity (77 participants or 73.3%), followed by content creation (21 participants or 20%). The dominance of watching updates is closely related to the FoMO construct, which is defined as the fear of missing events or experiences others enjoy [12]. This preference for passively consuming others' content rather than creating one's own reflects the social comparison aspect of FoMO, where individuals monitor their peers' activities to assess their experiences and social status.

Table 6. Activities Performed on TikTok

Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Live streaming	6	5.7%
Viewing updates	77	73.3%
Creating content	21	20%
Finding travel references	1	1%
Total	105	100%

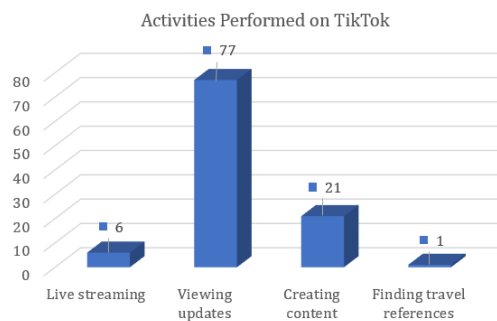


Figure 5. Activities Performed on TikTok

3.2. Reliability and Validity Testing

The researcher conducted validity and reliability tests on each variable. Validity testing was performed using Cronbach's α , while reliability was assessed using Corrected Item Total Correlation (CITC) using JASP software. The results for each measurement instrument are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7. Validity and Reliability Results of the Fear of Missing Out Scale

Dimension	Cronbach's α	CITC Range
<i>Fear of Missing Out (Unidimensional)</i>	0.916	0.51-0.81

Based on the validity and reliability test results in Table 7, it can be concluded that the FoMOS scale is valid and reliable as the Cronbach's alpha value is > 0.60 [18]. However, one item (item number 6) had to be dropped due to its CITC result not meeting the standard of < 0.30 [28]. The removal of this item is important to discuss as it has implications for measuring the FoMO construct. Item 6 in the original scale states, "I get anxious when I don't know what my friends are up to." The removal of this item may indicate that in Indonesia's more collectivist cultural context, anxiety related to friends' activities might be considered a standard form of concern rather than an indicator of FoMO. This suggests the need for cultural context consideration in adapting psychological scales.

Table 8. Validity and Reliability Results of the TikTok Addiction Scale

Dimension	Cronbach's α	CITC Range
<i>Virtual Tolerance</i>	0.824	0.53-0.66
<i>Virtual Communication</i>	0.886	0.37-0.71
<i>Virtual Problem</i>	0.788	0.33-0.63
<i>Virtual Information</i>	0.856	0.57-0.74

Based on the results in Table 8, the SMAS scale showed good reliability for each dimension tested. Each dimension had a Cronbach's Alpha value > 0.60 , indicating that this scale is reliable. However, item 11 in the Virtual Communication dimension had to be dropped because its CITC was < 0.30 . This item states, "I prefer to communicate with people via social media rather than face-to-face." The removal of this item is interesting as it may reflect cultural differences in communication preferences. In Indonesian society, which emphasizes direct social interaction and communal harmony, preference for online communication may not consistently indicate social media addiction as it might in individualistic cultures where the scale was initially developed.

3.3. Hypothesis Testing

Table 9. Simple Linear Regression Test Results

Variable	B	Standard Error	β	p
FoMO \rightarrow AMS	2.128	0.136	0.839	$<.001$

Model	R	R^2	F	P
FoMO \rightarrow AMS	0.839	0.704	245.269	$<.001$

Based on Table 9, the p-value shows <0.001 [18], indicating that the p-value $0.001 < 0.05$, which explains the significant influence of Fear of Missing Out on TikTok addiction. The hypothesis test results shown in Table 10 demonstrate that Fear of Missing Out influences TikTok addiction among TikTok users with a p-value of $<.001$. The hypothesis results indicate that H_1 is accepted and H_0 is rejected. The contribution of Fear of Missing Out to TikTok addiction is 70.4% ($R^2=0.704$). The beta coefficient value (β) shows 0.839, thus indicating that Fear of Missing Out positively influences TikTok addiction; the higher the Fear of Missing Out, the higher the individual's TikTok addiction.

This finding demonstrates a powerful relationship between FoMO and TikTok addiction, with FoMO explaining 70.4% of the variation in TikTok addiction. Compared to previous research that found FoMO accounts for approximately 34.1% of social media

addiction [15], the influence found in this study is substantially larger. This difference can be attributed to several factors: (1) the unique characteristics of TikTok compared to other platforms, (2) the focus on heavy users (4+ hours daily), and (3) Indonesia's collectivist cultural context, which may strengthen the relationship between FoMO and addictive behaviors.

3.4. Discussion

3.4.1 Relationship Between FoMO and TikTok Addiction

The significant relationship between FoMO and social media engagement patterns among emerging adults aligns with fundamental social psychological theories. Our findings reveal that FoMO is a social monitoring mechanism, reflecting deep-seated belongingness needs and social validation-seeking behaviors. This connection supports the belongingness hypothesis [39], which posits that humans possess an inherent drive to maintain social connections and avoid exclusion from critical social groups.

Emerging adults who experience higher levels of FoMO demonstrate behaviors consistent with heightened social comparison processes. Their persistent platform engagement reflects attempts to mitigate the psychological discomfort associated with perceived social exclusion. The substantial contribution of FoMO (70.4%) to engagement patterns suggests that emerging adults' platform usage is primarily driven by social psychological needs rather than technological features or addiction mechanisms. This aligns with research by Nafisa and Salim [30], who identified social validation and identity affirmation as core motivators underlying intensive social media engagement in early adulthood.

The social identity framework provides additional explanatory power for our findings. Emerging adults use TikTok not merely as a technological tool but as a social context for identity exploration, social positioning, and reference group alignment. When separated from this social context, individuals experience anxiety and distress because this separation threatens aspects of their social identity and group membership status [32]. This explains why participants in our study reported significant psychological discomfort when unable to access their social

platforms, while a phenomenon better understood as social identity threat rather than withdrawal symptoms of technological addiction.

In the Indonesian cultural context, characterized by strong collectivist values and emphasis on social harmony, FoMO may be particularly intensified. The cultural importance placed on group affiliation and maintaining social connections may amplify the fear of missing social information or experiences. This cultural dimension helps explain the exceptionally strong relationship found between FoMO and TikTok addiction in our Indonesian sample compared to studies conducted in more individualistic societies.

3.4.2 FoMO in the Context of Emerging Adulthood

Fear of Missing Out is most strongly experienced by adolescents and individuals in early adulthood [10]. According to Ibrahim et al. [32], individuals in early adulthood who have not yet obtained decent and permanent employment (not yet economically independent), are not married and have a family, do not have warm relationships in their social environment, and have unfulfilled ideal life demands, often experience stress multiple times compared to other age groups. Accessing social media is one way individuals divert their thoughts and negative emotions [33].

The relationship between social media and adolescent behavior, as explored by Saputra et al. [40], aligns with Manek and Virlia's findings regarding the specific mechanism of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in driving TikTok addiction. While Saputra et al. identified that social media influences teenage behavior through "peer social influence, online interactions, and information availability" [40, p. 153], our research provides deeper insight into the psychological construct underlying this relationship, defining FoMO as "a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing" [10]. This connection is particularly significant as both studies emphasize the developmental vulnerability of the adolescent and emerging adult demographic; Saputra et al. noted that harmful content like "cyberbullying and unattainable beauty standards" [40, p. 153] can trigger social anxiety and deviant behavior, while our research quantified this relationship, demonstrating that FoMO contributes a substantial 70.4% to TikTok addiction variability

among emerging adults in Indonesia, where TikTok has become the platform with the most extensive user base worldwide [5].

According to Jannah and Rosyidiyani [36], the indication of TikTok addiction occurs because individuals tend to always want to be connected with others. The aspect of relatedness, namely the need to build meaningful social relationships, influences this behavior. When this need is not met, individuals can experience anxiety and fear of alienation [10]. Additionally, Jannah and Rosyidiyani [36] also revealed that individuals who seek excessive entertainment tend to have difficulty managing time, causing them to spend hours on social media.

3.4.3 TikTok's Role in Fostering Addiction

TikTok has a highly personalized recommendation-based algorithm, allowing users to continuously receive content that matches individual preferences [37]. Various interesting content on TikTok, according to our findings, shows that respondents tend to prefer fashion, culinary, and travel content. The offering of this attractive content triggers the urge to stay connected so as not to miss the latest trends, which ultimately strengthens the tendency toward TikTok addiction.

Unlike text or image-based social media such as Twitter and Instagram, TikTok encourages more instant and addictive interaction. This aligns with the characteristics of respondents who, among other things, use TikTok as a platform for live streaming and creating interesting content. These factors contribute to the increase in TikTok addiction [38] and interfere with daily activities, such as studying, socializing, and even sleep patterns and physical health. In other words, high engagement with TikTok can be an indication of addiction to the platform [39].

However, it is essential to note that TikTok's algorithm and features alone do not fully explain addiction patterns. These technological elements interact with users' social psychological needs, particularly in Indonesia's collectivist culture, where social connection and group identity are highly valued. The platform's success in capturing emerging adults' attention lies in its ability to address fundamental psychological needs for social validation, identity exploration, and belongingness in a digital environment that feels immediate and personally relevant.

4. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) significantly influences TikTok addiction among emerging adults in Indonesia, with FoMO contributing 70.4% to TikTok addiction variability ($R^2=0.704$, $p<.001$). The higher the level of FoMO, the greater the tendency toward TikTok addiction. Results reveal that most participants (63.81%) spend 4-5 hours daily on TikTok, primarily viewing updates (73.3%), far exceeding the 60-120 minutes threshold associated with problematic usage.

The findings contribute to both developmental and social psychological theoretical frameworks by demonstrating how the need for social connection and identity validation drives digital behavior in collectivist cultural contexts. The strong relationship between FoMO and TikTok addiction suggests that emerging adults' platform usage is primarily motivated by fundamental social needs rather than technological features alone.

This research has two key limitations: the unrecorded geographic distribution of participants and the cross-sectional design that prevents establishing causality. For future research, we recommend exploring specific mediator variables (self-regulation, cultural orientation) and conducting longitudinal studies to examine how FoMO-addiction patterns evolve.

From a practical perspective, we recommend developing digital literacy programs that help emerging adults recognize FoMO triggers and implement healthy boundaries. Such interventions should be culturally sensitive to address the unique social pressures experienced by Indonesian emerging adults in a collectivist society.

In conclusion, this study addresses a significant gap in understanding how FoMO specifically influences TikTok addiction among emerging adults in Indonesia, providing valuable insights for developing targeted interventions to promote healthier social media usage in this vulnerable demographic group.

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