

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND FEAR OF MISSING OUT AMONG PARENTS WHO USE FACEBOOK

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ABSTRACT

Fear of missing out (FoMO) has become an increasingly relevant psychological phenomenon in the digital era, including among parents who actively use Facebook. Self-esteem may be associated with FoMO because individuals with lower self-evaluation tend to seek external validation and remain continuously connected to social information. This study aimed to examine the relationship between self-esteem and FoMO among parents who use Facebook in Salatiga City. A quantitative correlational design was employed. Participants were 335 parents aged 18-60 years who had at least one child, actively used Facebook, and lived in Salatiga City. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on predetermined inclusion criteria. Data were collected using an adapted Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI) and the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS). The instruments met the item-validity criterion and demonstrated acceptable reliability. Because the data were not normally distributed, the hypothesis was tested using Spearman's rank correlation. The results showed a significant negative association between self-esteem and FoMO ($\rho = -0.156, p = 0.004$). This finding indicates that higher self-esteem is associated with lower FoMO; however, the relationship is very weak. Therefore, self-esteem should not be interpreted as the only psychological factor related to FoMO. Other factors, such as Facebook-use intensity, social comparison, loneliness, social anxiety, and digital self-validation, may also contribute to FoMO among parents. These findings provide an empirical basis for digital well-being programs that combine self-esteem strengthening with digital literacy and self-regulation strategies.

Keywords: Facebook; Fear of Missing Out; Parents; Self-Esteem; Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of contemporary social life. Platforms such as Facebook enable users to communicate across distance, maintain interpersonal relationships, exchange information, and participate in various online communities (boyd & Ellison, 2007). The function of Facebook is not limited to entertainment; it also supports relationship maintenance, social capital, and access to social support (Ellison et al., 2007). Although social media was initially associated with younger users, adult and older adult users have also become an important part of the digital ecosystem. In Indonesia, recent digital reports show that internet and social media use continues to expand across population groups (APJII, 2024; DataReportal, 2025). This context makes Facebook use among parents a relevant object of psychological inquiry.

For parents, Facebook may serve several practical and relational functions. Parents use Facebook to communicate with family members, reconnect with old friends, follow children's activities, obtain community information, and participate in social or religious groups. These functions may support connectedness and perceived social support. However, the same platform can also generate psychological pressure when users feel compelled to monitor updates continuously, compare their lives with others, or fear missing important information and social experiences.

One psychological phenomenon associated with intensive social media engagement is fear of missing out (FoMO). FoMO refers to a pervasive apprehension that others may be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, accompanied by a desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing (Przybylski et al., 2013). In the context of Facebook, FoMO may appear as the urge to frequently check notifications, worry about missing family or community updates, and anxiety when unable to access social media. Previous studies have connected FoMO with social media engagement, problematic smartphone use, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and lower well-being (Elhai et al., 2016; Oberst et al., 2017).

Self-esteem is one of the psychological characteristics that may be associated with FoMO. Self-esteem refers to the individual's evaluation of personal worth, competence, and acceptance (Rosenberg, 1965). From Coopersmith's perspective, self-esteem reflects the extent to which individuals perceive themselves

as capable, significant, successful, and worthy (Coopersmith, 1967). Individuals with lower self-esteem may be more vulnerable to external validation, social comparison, and the need to monitor online social information. Conversely, individuals with higher self-esteem may have stronger internal self-acceptance and better emotional regulation when facing digital social pressure.

The relevance of this issue is supported by a preliminary survey conducted among 48 parents in Salatiga City. The survey asked whether respondents felt the need to keep checking social media to avoid missing information and whether they felt worried or stressed when they missed something important on Facebook. The results indicated that 58% of respondents felt the need to check social media repeatedly, while 52% reported worry or stress when they missed information. These preliminary findings suggest that FoMO may not be limited to adolescents or university students but may also occur among parents who use Facebook.

A gap exists between the ideal and actual functions of social media. Ideally, Facebook helps parents maintain relationships, access useful information, and improve social connectedness. In reality, however, Facebook can also produce anxiety, digital comparison, compulsive checking, and pressure to remain constantly updated. This gap becomes more important because many FoMO studies have focused on adolescents, young adults, or general social media users (Beyens et al., 2016; Przybylski et al., 2013). Studies that specifically examine FoMO among parents who use Facebook remain limited, although parents have distinctive digital experiences related to family roles, community participation, and intergenerational communication.

Therefore, this study focuses on the relationship between self-esteem and FoMO among parents who use Facebook in Salatiga City. The novelty of this study lies in its specific population and platform context. Rather than examining young social media users in general, this study investigates parents whose Facebook use is embedded in family, community, and adult social roles. The study aims to determine whether self-esteem is significantly associated with FoMO and to interpret the strength of this relationship within the broader psychological dynamics of digital well-being among parents.

METHOD

Research Design

This study used a quantitative correlational design. This design was selected because the study aimed to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between two psychological variables, namely self-esteem and FoMO, without manipulating either variable. The correlational design does not permit causal inference; therefore, the findings are interpreted as associations rather than evidence of direct effects.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants were parents who actively used Facebook and lived in Salatiga City, Central Java. In this study, parents were defined as adults aged 18-60 years who had at least one child and used Facebook regularly for communication, information access, or social interaction. The inclusion criteria were: (a) being a parent, (b) being 18-60 years old, (c) actively using Facebook, and (d) residing in Salatiga City. A total of 335 participants met the criteria and completed the questionnaire. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling because the respondents had to meet specific criteria relevant to the research focus.

Research Instruments

Self-esteem was measured using an adapted Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI), which was developed to assess individuals' evaluation of their personal worth and competence (Coopersmith, 1967). The adapted version used in this study consisted of 32 scored items that assessed the respondent's self-evaluation, sense of personal worth, perceived competence, and acceptance. Higher scores indicated higher self-esteem. Fear of missing out was measured using the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS), which was developed by Przybylski et al. (2013) and adapted to the Facebook-use context. The FoMOS consisted of 10 items using a four-point response scale, with higher scores indicating a stronger tendency to experience FoMO. Language and contextual adjustments were made to ensure that the instruments were understandable for parents in Salatiga City. Item analysis showed that the items met the validity criterion ($r \geq 0.30$), and reliability testing indicated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha > 0.60).

Data Collection Procedure and Research Ethics

Data were collected from May 1 to May 31, 2025, using an online questionnaire distributed through Facebook community groups in Salatiga and private messages to potential respondents who met the inclusion criteria. Before completing the questionnaire, participants received information about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to discontinue participation. Informed consent was obtained before respondents proceeded to the questionnaire. To minimize duplicate responses and improve data validity, verification questions were included. Any identifying information used for verification was separated from the research data, anonymized, and used only to ensure data eligibility. The collected data were used solely for academic research purposes.

Data Analysis

The data were screened to ensure completeness and eligibility. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the variables. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to assess normality. Because both variables were not normally distributed, the hypothesis was tested using Spearman's rank correlation. Spearman's rho was used to determine the direction and strength of the association between self-esteem and FoMO. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 335 parents who actively used Facebook and lived in Salatiga City. The demographic information collected included gender, age, educational background, and occupation. The descriptive statistics for self-esteem and FoMO are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Self-Esteem and Fear of Missing Out

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Esteem	335	12	32	21.72	3.260
Fear of Missing Out	335	29	36	34.09	1.456
Valid N (listwise)	335				

Table 1 shows that the mean score of self-esteem was 21.72 (SD = 3.260), with scores ranging from 12 to 32. Meanwhile, the mean score of FoMO was 34.09 (SD = 1.456), with scores ranging from 29 to 36. These findings indicate that participants generally reported relatively high levels of self-esteem and FoMO.

Table 2. Categorization of the Self-Esteem Scale

Scale	Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Self-Esteem	$x \geq 25.7$	Very High	28	8.4%
	$19.3 \leq x < 25.7$	High	287	85.7%
	$12.9 \leq x < 19.3$	Moderate	9	2.7%
	$6.5 \leq x < 12.9$	Low	11	3.3%
	$x < 6.5$	Very Low	0	0.0%
Total			335	100%

Based on the categorization shown in Table 2, most respondents were in the high self-esteem category (85.7%), followed by the very high category (8.4%). Only a small proportion of participants were categorized as moderate (2.7%) and low (3.3%).

Table 3. Categorization of the Fear of Missing Out Scale

Scale	Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Fear of Missing Out	$34.1 \leq x \leq 40$	Very High	142	42.4%
	$28.1 \leq x < 34.1$	High	193	57.6%
	$22.1 \leq x < 28.1$	Moderate	0	0.0%
	$16.1 \leq x < 22.1$	Low	0	0.0%
	$10 \leq x < 16.1$	Very Low	0	0.0%
Total			335	100%

Table 3 indicates that all respondents were categorized within the high and very high FoMO levels. Specifically, 57.6% of respondents were in the high category, while 42.4% were in the very high category. This pattern suggests a restricted score range and the possibility of a ceiling effect in the FoMO data.

Table 4. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test Results

Indicator	Self-Esteem (X)	Fear of Missing Out (Y)
N	335	335
Mean	21.72	34.09
Std. Deviation	3.260	1.456
Test Statistic	0.218	0.339
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test in Table 4 shows that both variables were not normally distributed because the significance values were below 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis was tested using a non-parametric correlation analysis, namely Spearman's rank correlation.

Table 5. Linearity Test Results

Relationship	Source	F	Sig.
Self-Esteem and Fear of Missing Out	Linearity	8.576	0.004
	Deviation from Linearity	0.677	0.797

The linearity test showed a significant linear component between self-esteem and FoMO ($p = 0.004$), while the deviation from linearity was not significant ($p = 0.797$). This result indicates that the relationship pattern was adequate for correlation analysis.

Table 6. Spearman's Rank Correlation Between Self-Esteem and Fear of Missing Out

Variable	Self-Esteem (X)	Fear of Missing Out (Y)
Self-Esteem (X) - Spearman's rho	1.000	-0.156
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.004
N	335	335
Fear of Missing Out (Y) - Spearman's rho	-0.156	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004	
N	335	335

Table 6 shows a significant negative association between self-esteem and FoMO ($\rho = -0.156$, $p = 0.004$). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The direction of the relationship indicates that higher self-esteem is associated with lower FoMO. However, the correlation coefficient falls within the very weak category, meaning that self-esteem explains only a small part of the variation in FoMO.

The results indicate that self-esteem is significantly and negatively associated with FoMO among parents who use Facebook in Salatiga City. This finding is consistent with the theoretical assumption that individuals who evaluate themselves more positively tend to rely less on external validation from social media (Coopersmith, 1967; Rosenberg, 1965). In contrast, individuals with lower self-esteem may be more sensitive to social comparison, fear of exclusion, and the need to remain connected to online social information. Similar patterns have been reported in research linking social media vulnerability, Facebook use, and self-esteem-related outcomes (Błachnio et al., 2016; Buglass et al., 2017).

From the perspective of Coopersmith's self-esteem theory, self-esteem is related to perceptions of personal competence, significance, virtue, and power (Coopersmith, 1967). Parents with stronger self-esteem may be better able to regulate emotional responses when viewing other people's posts, family updates, or social achievements displayed on Facebook. They may also be less likely to interpret the absence of online information as a threat to their social belonging. Conversely, parents with weaker self-esteem may experience greater pressure to monitor Facebook in order to maintain social relevance, obtain validation, and avoid feeling left behind.

Nevertheless, the correlation found in this study was very weak. This means that statistical significance should not be equated with strong practical significance. The significant p-value may be partly influenced by the relatively large sample size, while the low correlation coefficient indicates that self-esteem is only one small component of FoMO. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted carefully. The study supports an association between self-esteem and FoMO, but it does not show that self-esteem is the dominant factor or that self-esteem directly causes FoMO.

The weak correlation is theoretically meaningful because FoMO is a multidimensional digital phenomenon. Other psychological and behavioral factors may be more strongly associated with FoMO, including intensity of Facebook use, frequency of checking notifications, social comparison orientation, loneliness, social anxiety, neuroticism, problematic social media use, and dependence on digital validation (Elhai et al., 2016; Oberst et al., 2017; Przybylski et al., 2013). For parents, contextual factors may also contribute, such as the desire to follow children's activities, maintain family networks, respond to community information, and remain socially present in local Facebook groups.

An important finding is that most respondents had high self-esteem but also high FoMO. This pattern suggests that high self-esteem does not fully protect parents from FoMO when digital environments continuously expose them to social updates, family narratives, community announcements, and comparison cues. Facebook can create a perceived obligation to remain informed and responsive, a pattern consistent with studies emphasizing the role of social needs and platform-related stress in FoMO (Beyens et al., 2016). Therefore, FoMO among parents may emerge not only from low self-worth but also from digital habits, family roles, community expectations, and the social design of the platform.

The descriptive results also suggest a possible ceiling effect in the FoMO variable because all respondents were categorized as high or very high and the standard deviation was relatively small. This restricted variability may reduce the size of the correlation coefficient. Future studies should examine whether the FoMOS adaptation is sufficiently sensitive for adult parent populations and whether additional items are needed to capture more diverse levels of FoMO.

The findings have practical implications for digital well-being programs. Interventions for parents should not focus solely on increasing self-esteem. Instead, they should combine self-esteem strengthening with digital literacy, self-regulation of social media use, awareness of social comparison, notification management, and reflective use of Facebook. Parents may benefit from guidance on distinguishing useful information from anxiety-driven checking behavior and from developing healthier boundaries in online engagement.

This study has several limitations. First, the correlational design does not allow causal conclusions. Second, purposive non-probability sampling limits the generalizability of the findings to all parents in Salatiga City or other regions. Third, the use of self-report questionnaires may produce social desirability bias and response inaccuracies. Fourth, the FoMO scores showed limited variation, suggesting a possible ceiling effect. Future research should use longitudinal or mixed-method designs, include broader demographic groups, and test mediating or moderating variables such as social comparison, loneliness, digital literacy, and Facebook-use intensity.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between self-esteem and FoMO among parents who use Facebook in Salatiga City. The findings showed a significant negative association between self-esteem and FoMO ($\rho = -0.156, p = 0.004$). This means that higher self-esteem is associated with lower FoMO. However, the strength of the relationship is very weak, so the result should be interpreted as a limited association rather than evidence of a strong psychological effect.

The study confirms that self-esteem is relevant to understanding FoMO among parents, but it is not sufficient as a single explanatory factor. FoMO among parents who use Facebook may also be shaped by social media intensity, social comparison, digital validation, loneliness, anxiety, and the social roles of parents in family and community networks. Therefore, practical efforts to reduce FoMO should combine self-esteem development with digital literacy, reflective social media use, and self-regulation strategies. Future research should explore broader predictors and use longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to better explain the psychological dynamics of FoMO among adult and parent populations.

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