

## Critical Review: The Negative Impacts of Social Media-Induced Fear of Missing Out (FoMO): Online Stalking, Social Comparison, and Digital Fatigue

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### Abstrack

The purpose of this article is to analyze in depth the criticism of the negative impact of social media addiction which gives rise to FoMO attitudes. This research uses a critical observation method with a qualitative descriptive approach, with a focus on in-depth analysis of the methodology, conclusions and discussion of the main article. The main reference comes from the article entitled "Dark Consequences of Social Media-Inducing Fear of Missing Out (FoMO): Social Media Stalking, Comparisons, and Fatigue" written by Tandon et al., and published in October 2021. The article reviews in detail critical methodology, findings, and discussion. The results of the analysis show a complex interaction between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), social comparison, social media stalking, and digital fatigue, which has a significant impact on adolescents' psychological well-being. This critical review provides new insights into the psychological mechanisms behind excessive social media use and its impact on the mental health of young people. This research highlights the need for educational and awareness interventions to reduce the negative impact of social media use on adolescents.

**Keywords:** dark side of social media, fear of missing out (FoMO), online social comparison, social media fatigue, social media stalking

### Abstrak

Tujuan dari tulisan ini untuk menganalisis secara mendalam kritik terhadap dampak negatif kecanduan sosial media yang memunculkan sikap FoMO. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode tinjauan kritis dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, dengan fokus pada analisis mendalam metodologi, temuan, dan diskusi dari artikel utama. Referensi utama berasal dari artikel berjudul "Dark Consequences of Social Media-Inducing Fear of Missing Out (FoMO): Social Media Stalking, Comparisons, and Fatigue" karangan Tandon et al., dan telah diterbitkan pada Oktober 2021. Artikel tersebut ditinjau secara kritis mengenai metodologi, temuan, dan diskusi. Hasil analisis menunjukkan kompleksnya interaksi antara Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), perbandingan sosial, stalking media sosial, dan kelelahan digital, yang berdampak signifikan pada kesejahteraan psikologis remaja. Tinjauan kritis ini memberikan wawasan baru tentang mekanisme psikologis di balik penggunaan media sosial yang berlebihan dan implikasinya terhadap kesehatan mental generasi muda. Penelitian ini menyoroti perlunya intervensi pendidikan dan kesadaran untuk mengurangi dampak negatif penggunaan media sosial pada remaja.

**Kata kunci:** sisi gelap media sosial, takut ketinggalan (FoMO), perbandingan sosial online, kelelahan media sosial, penguntai media sosial

### Article info

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## INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an inseparable part of teenagers' lives in today's digital era. Based on data from *We Are Social and Hootsuite* (2023), more than 75% of internet users in Indonesia are teenagers aged 13 to 24 years, with platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp being their favorites (Kompas, 2023). Social media offers a variety of benefits, such as quick access to information and a means to express oneself (Naslund et al., 2020). However, many negative impacts can affect the social and psychological lives of adolescents (Sundari et al., 2023) when the use of social media is not controlled. One of the most commonly found problems is social media addiction (Nurlina et al., 2022).

Social media for teenagers has provided access to all information quickly and instantly; teenagers can search in real-time for the information they want in Indonesia and all regions of the world (Dolega et al., 2021). A survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2023 showed that the average teenager in Indonesia spends about 4-6 hours per day on social media. As many as 42% of them feel anxious or anxious when they cannot access social media (Hamdi & Gautama, 2024). Adolescents who have excessive attachment to social media are often faced with disorders of pathological and social problems, feelings of depression, anxiety about missing information (FoMO), and academic problems that can affect their quality of life (Pambudy, 2023).

FoMO is the fear of missing out on trends or essential information being *hyped* on social media (Doran, 2021). As a result, this FOMO phenomenon gives adolescents a sense of always being *up-to-date* with information in online activities so that they do not become outdated and considered irrelevant to their friends (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). FOMO can strengthen social media dependence, as it encourages teens to spend more time online, ultimately exacerbating addiction and reducing psychological well-being. As a result, adolescents who experience FOMO tend to show symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression and decreased self-confidence (Oberst et al., 2017).

FoMO encourages compulsive behaviors to stay connected online, often impacting psychological well-being (Fioravanti et al., 2021). Some consequences of FoMO induced by social media include increased *stalking*, unfavorable social comparisons, and social *media fatigue* (Nursodiq et al., 2020). *Social media stalking* is an effort made by a person to monitor other people's activities on social media intensively, which can lead to obsessive behaviors and mental health disorders, such as anxiety and stress (Tandon et al., 2021). Social comparisons arising from social media activities often make individuals feel inferior or envious of the lives of others who seem more "ideal" or "successful," exacerbating feelings of self-satisfaction and even leading to depression (Verduyn et al., 2020).

On the other hand, intensive use of social media without sufficient pauses results in digital fatigue or *social media fatigue* (Sharma et al., 2022). This burnout arises when a person feels overwhelmed by the excessive volume of information and pressure to stay active on social media, which ultimately reduces their mental and emotional health (Tandon et al., 2021). This phenomenon is further exacerbated when FoMO constantly encourages individuals to stay engaged on the platform even if they are already feeling tired, thus creating a negative cycle that is difficult to avoid (Doran, 2021).

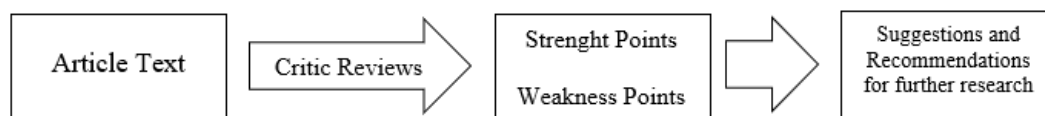
Overall, a deep understanding of *social media stalking*, unfavorable social comparisons, and digital fatigue is essential to identify the risk factors and psychological impacts that adolescents face. This study aims to analyze in-depth through a critical



review of an article entitled "*Dark Consequences of Social Media-Induced Fear of Missing Out (FoMO): Social Media Stalking, Comparisons, and Fatigue*" written by Anushree Tandon, Amandeep Dhir, Shalini Talwar, Puneet Kaur, Matti Mantymaki and has been published in the journal *Technological Forecasting & Social Change* Vol. 171, October 2021. So the novelty value in this paper is the suggestions and recommendations for further research from the results of critical analysis of the articles reviewed. It is hoped that the results of this study can be the basic implementation to design effective interventions for educators, parents, and counselors in dealing with social media addiction in adolescents, as well as helping them reduce the negative impact of this phenomenon.

## METHOD

The method used in this study is Critical Review with a descriptive qualitative approach. The discussion is based on several literature reviews on the impact of FoMO and its connection to *social media stalking, comparisons, and fatigue*. This study aims to analyze in-depth through a critical review of an article entitled "*Dark Consequences of Social Media-Induced Fear of Missing Out (FoMO): Social Media Stalking, Comparisons, and Fatigue*" written by Anushree Tandon, Amandeep Dhir, Shalini Talwar, Puneet Kaur, Matti Mantymaki and has been published in the journal *Technological Forecasting & Social Change* Vol. 171, October 2021 (Tandon et al., 2021). The article is critically reviewed regarding methodology, findings, and discussions. The results of the analysis were then reviewed to find strengths and weaknesses and suggestions for further research.



**Figure 1.** The Flow Chart of Critical Review

An article from Tandon et al. (2021) uses several methods to analyze the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), social comparisons on social media, stalking behavior, and burnout. This method is designed to provide deep insights into how FoMO can influence social media user behavior and contribute to the burnout experienced by individuals. Here is a summary of the methods used:

1. **Data Collection:** Tandon et al. recruited 324 social media users through Prolific Academic and used a survey created in Google Forms. The data was collected from UK users, focusing on the 18- to 25-year-old age group, which is considered more vulnerable to the adverse effects of social media use.
2. **Validity and Reliability:** Before the survey is conducted, the items in the questionnaire are tested for face and content validity by a panel of experts. In addition, the survey was also tested on 15 social media users to ensure the clarity and relevance of the items.
3. **Data Analysis:** The authors used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS Graphics 26 to analyze the data and study the proposed relationships between the variables. Mediation and moderation are tested using the Hayes PROCESS macro. This analysis was conducted to understand the effect of FoMO, stalking, and social comparison on fatigue.



4. Scale Validity and Reliability Analysis: The validity and reliability of the scale used were determined through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and heterotrait-monotrait analysis (HTMT).

Normality and Bias Examination of Common Methods: The data is examined for normality and multicollinearity before the CFA analysis. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value and tolerance value are used to ensure no multicollinearity effect in the data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Consequences of the Fear of Loss (FoMO) Caused by Social Media: Social Media Stalking, Comparison, and Burnout, the author has summarized the results of the critical notes of the research findings. Here is a more detailed explanation of the key findings from the article's research:

**Table 1.**  
Findings of the Article

Findings	Critical Analysis
The Relationship Between FoMO and Fatigue	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research shows that Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has a significant relationship with the fatigue experienced by social media users. Users who experience FoMO tend to feel depressed and anxious because they feel they have to stay connected and know what their friends are doing. This causes them to feel overwhelmed and mentally exhausted due to the information they constantly receive from social media.</li> <li>2. The article explains the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and fatigue through complex interaction mechanisms. FoMO, which refers to the anxiety that individuals experience because they feel left behind from the social experiences that others experience, can encourage individuals to engage in more intensive and sustainable use of social media. This FoMO experience often causes individuals to feel pressured to constantly monitor social activity on social media platforms, which can lead to compulsive social media use behavior. Social media fatigue emerges due to this over-engagement, where individuals feel mentally and emotionally exhausted from the pressure to stay connected and engaged.</li> <li>3. The article also points out that social comparisons mediate these relationships, where individuals who experience FoMO tend to compare themselves to others, which can exacerbate burnout. Thus, FoMO and fatigue are intertwined in a cycle in which the anxiety of not missing out drives excessive social media use, which ultimately leads to fatigue and a negative impact on the psychological well-being of individuals.</li> </ol>
Social Comparison as a Mediator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Social comparisons serve as mediators in the relationship between FoMO and burnout. This means</li> </ol>



Findings	Critical Analysis
	<p>that when a person experiences FoMO, they are more likely to compare themselves to others on social media. This comparison process can increase feelings of inferiority and dissatisfaction, which contributes to burnout. The study shows that users who often compare themselves to others tend to feel more tired and depressed.</p> <p>5. The article identified social comparison as a significant mediator in the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and burnout. Social comparison refers to an individual's tendency to compare themselves to others, especially in social media, where individuals often look at other people's lives and experiences that seem more exciting or satisfying. When a person experiences FoMO, they tend to be more active in monitoring the social activities of others, which can trigger feelings of dissatisfaction and anxiety. This process creates a cycle in which individuals affected by FoMO feel compelled to constantly compare themselves to others, which in turn increases the level of fatigue they experience. In other words, social comparisons exacerbate the negative impact of FoMO, as individuals feel pressured to stay connected and exhausted from constant comparisons with others.</p> <p>6. This article emphasizes that understanding social comparison as a mediator is essential to identify the underlying mechanisms of the relationship between FoMO and burnout and formulate more effective strategies to address social media use's negative impacts.</p>
Stalking and Fatigue	<p>7. Stalking on social media, defined as the behavior of excessively monitoring the activities of others, was also found to be related to burnout. Users who spend a lot of time monitoring other people's profiles and following their activities tend to experience higher burnout. This suggests that stalking behavior can exacerbate the negative impact of FoMO, as users feel trapped in an unhealthy monitoring cycle.</p> <p>8. In the article, the relationship between stalking on social media and fatigue is explained as an interrelated phenomenon, where stalking behavior can contribute to the social media user's experience of fatigue. Stalking, defined as passively monitoring other people's profiles and activities on social media, is often done by individuals who feel the need to stay connected and informed about other people's lives. This behavior can</p>



<b>Findings</b>	<b>Critical Analysis</b>
	<p>create a significant mental burden, as individuals involved in stalking are often exposed to large and varied volumes of information, which can lead to information overload or overload. As a result, individuals who engage in stalking can feel emotionally and mentally exhausted as they are constantly striving to process and understand the information they receive.</p> <p>9. This article shows that stalking is not just a surveillance behavior but can also be a coping mechanism for individuals who feel a lack of social interaction, especially in the context of situations such as lockdowns. However, while stalking may provide a temporary sense of satisfaction, in the end, this behavior contributes to more significant burnout, creating a negative cycle that impacts the psychological well-being of social media users.</p>
Moderation by Envy Social Media	<p>10. The study also found that social media envy (jealousy of other people's experiences on social media) can moderate the relationship between FoMO and social comparison. Users who feel jealous of what they see on social media are more likely to make unfavorable social comparisons, which can exacerbate the fatigue they experience. This suggests that negative emotions such as jealousy can amplify the adverse effects of FoMO and social comparisons.</p> <p>11. In the article, social media envy or envy arising from comparisons with other people's lives on social media platforms is identified as an essential factor affecting users' psychological well-being. Social media envy can appear when individuals see posts or updates from friends or people they follow who seem happier, more successful, or have a more exciting experience. This feeling of envy can trigger negative feelings, such as dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and even anxiety, which in turn can worsen the experience of burnout.</p> <p>12. This article emphasizes that social media envy is not only emotional but can also influence user behavior, encouraging them to engage in more intensive social stalking or comparison. Thus, envy is a driving force that reinforces the negative cycle between social media use, social comparisons, and burnout. This study shows that understanding the role of envy in social media is essential for identifying the negative impacts of social media use and formulating strategies that can help individuals manage feelings of envy and improve their overall well-being.</p>



The discussion in this article focuses on a deeper understanding of the relationship between psychological phenomena related to social media use, specifically Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), social comparisons, stalking, and burnout. The authors attribute the findings to social comparison theory and computational internet use theory, which explains how individuals compare themselves to others and use social media to overcome real-life shortcomings, which can exacerbate feelings of FoMO and burnout.

This article highlights that FoMO does not stand alone but interacts with other phenomena, such as social comparison and stalking, where users who experience FoMO tend to be more active in monitoring other people's activities on social media, which can lead to stalking and reinforce social comparisons, thereby increasing burnout. The authors also emphasize the negative impact of social media use on the psychological well-being of individuals, where FoMO experiences can lead to anxiety and dissatisfaction exacerbated by stalking behavior and social comparisons.

Additionally, social media envy can moderate the relationship between FoMO and social comparisons, where users who feel jealous of other people's experiences are more likely to engage in adverse social comparisons. The authors recommend educational programs to help social media users understand the negative impacts of their behavior and develop strategies to mitigate those impacts, including raising awareness about the importance of balance in social media use.

The results of the article's discussion also discuss the scope of suggestions for further research in this field. The authors indicate that there is still much to learn about how these phenomena interact and their impact on individual well-being. Further research can help develop more effective interventions to address the problems that arise from social media use. Overall, the discussion in this article provides in-depth insights into how psychological phenomena related to social media interact with each other and their impact on individual well-being, as well as the importance of awareness and education in addressing these issues.

The results showed a complex interaction between FoMO, social comparison, stalking, and burnout. The study confirms that social media users who experience FoMO feel anxious about losing experience and get caught in a cycle of detrimental social comparisons. This can lead to significant psychological and physical fatigue. The study also highlights that stalking behavior on social media can exacerbate the negative impact of FoMO, creating a vicious circle where users feel increasingly tired and depressed.

### **Critical Analysis of Article Strengths/Strengths**

The strength of this study lies in several essential aspects that contribute significantly to the understanding of the negative impact of social media use, including: First, this study integrates several psychological phenomena that are often studied separately, such as Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), social comparison, stalking, and burnout, in one comprehensive framework. Thus, this study can describe the complex interactions between these phenomena and how they affect each other, which were previously underpaid in the literature.

Second, this study uses a powerful analysis method, namely Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which allows researchers to test the relationships between variables more in-depth and accurately. Using data from 321 social media users in the UK also provides a large enough database to draw more generalizable conclusions. Third, the study identified a direct relationship between FoMO, social comparison, and burnout and explored the role of mediation and moderation, such as the role of stalking and social



media envy. This provides new insights into how these factors can amplify or mitigate the negative impact of FoMO, thus providing a more holistic understanding of social media user behavior dynamics.

Fourth, this research is relevant to the current social context, where the use of social media is increasing, especially during the lockdown period due to the pandemic. These findings could provide a basis for developing educational interventions and programs to raise users' awareness of the negative impacts of their behavior on social media. Overall, the strength of this research lies in its holistic approach, robust methodology, and relevance to contemporary issues, all of which contribute to a better understanding of the "dark side" of social media use and its implications for the psychological well-being of individuals.

### **Critical Analysis Of The Weakness Of The Article**

The weaknesses of this study include several aspects that can affect the validity and generalization of the findings. First, this study uses self-reported data, which can result in bias in the report. Respondents may not be completely honest or accurate in describing their experiences regarding social media use, FoMO, and feelings of burnout, which can affect the study results.

Second, the sample used in the study was limited to social media users in the UK, which may limit the generalization of the findings to a broader population. Cultural, social, and demographic differences in other countries may result in different behavioral patterns regarding social media use and its impact. Therefore, the results of this study may not be fully applicable to other contexts outside the UK.

Third, the study is cross-sectional, meaning that data is collected at one point. This limits the ability to conclude the cause-and-effect relationship between variables. Longitudinal research that observes changes over time will more effectively understand the relationship dynamics between FoMO, social comparison, stalking, and burnout.

Fourth, although this study explores some of the mediation and moderation variables, many other factors may contribute to the phenomenon studied, such as personality, anxiety levels, or other situational factors. Further research considering these additional variables could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the relationship between social media use and psychological well-being.

Finally, the study does not distinguish between different social media platforms, which may have different characteristics and impacts on users. More in-depth research considering the differences between platforms can provide more specific and relevant insights into how each platform affects user behavior and well-being. Overall, while this study contributes to understanding the negative impacts of social media use, these weaknesses indicate the need for further research to strengthen and expand on existing findings.

### **Author's Suggestions and Recommendations for Further Research**

The suggestions from this article and for subsequent research include several key points that can help deepen understanding of the impact of social media use and improve the quality of future research. First, it is suggested that further research use more diverse methodologies, including longitudinal and experimental approaches, to overcome the limitations of the cross-sectional design used in this study. Longitudinal methods can help understand the relationships between variables over time, while experiments can provide more precise insights into cause-and-effect relationships. In addition, subsequent research





should involve a more demographically and geographically diverse sample by collecting data from different countries and age groups to understand how cultural and social contexts affect social media user experiences and their impact on well-being.

Furthermore, exploring additional variables that may influence the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), social comparisons, and burnout, such as personality factors, anxiety levels, and other negative emotions, is essential. Future research is also suggested to analyze the impact of social media use specifically by platform, given the differences in characteristics and user experience across platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. In addition, this study emphasizes the need to develop educational programs and interventions designed to raise awareness about the negative impacts of social media use and explore the effectiveness of different types of interventions, such as mindfulness programs or social skills training (Handayu et al., 2022). Finally, it is essential to raise awareness among users, social media service providers, and policymakers about the negative impacts of social media use so that further research can help formulate better policy recommendations to address this issue. By following these suggestions, future research can contribute more significantly to understanding the impact of social media use and aid in developing strategies to improve user well-being.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this article emphasizes the importance of understanding the negative impacts of social media use, especially among young users. The authors recommend educational programs designed to raise awareness about the adverse effects of social media, including FoMO, social comparisons, and stalking. They encourage individuals to be more aware of how their interactions on social media can affect their mental and emotional well-being. The authors also suggest that individuals do not assume that "likes" and interactions on social media can affect their subjective happiness or well-being. This research paves the way for further study of psychosocial phenomena related to social media use, its impact on individual well-being, and the importance of creating a healthier and more positive social media environment.

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