

*Research Article*

# The Relationship between Self-Regulation and Fear of Missing Out in the Use of Social Media TikTok among Students of University X

**Carla Olivia Kusuma<sup>1\*</sup>, Agoes Dariyo<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Psychology, Tarumanagara University, Indonesia, [carlaolivia1988@gmail.com](mailto:carlaolivia1988@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Psychology, Tarumanagara University, Indonesia, [agoesd@fpsi.untar.ac.id](mailto:agoesd@fpsi.untar.ac.id)Correspondence Author: [carlaolivia1988@gmail.com](mailto:carlaolivia1988@gmail.com)

**Abstract.** The phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is increasingly experienced by university students along with the rising use of TikTok as a source of entertainment and information. The fast and constantly changing flow of content often makes users feel the need to always keep up with developments so as not to be left behind. In this condition, self-regulation is viewed as an important ability that can help reduce the tendency for FoMO to emerge. This study aims to determine the relationship between self-regulation and FoMO among university students who use TikTok. A total of 206 students participated by completing an online questionnaire that used the Short Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SSRQ) and the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS). The normality test showed that both variables were not normally distributed; therefore, the analysis was continued using Spearman correlation. The results showed a significant negative relationship between self-regulation and FoMO ( $r = -0.370$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). These findings indicate that the better the students' ability to regulate themselves, the lower their tendency to experience FoMO when using TikTok. Overall, this study emphasizes that self-regulation has an important role in helping students deal with the dynamics of social media use and can serve as a basis for developing strategies to encourage more balanced social media use.

**Keywords:** Fear of Missing Out; Self-regulation; Social Media; University Students; Use of TikTok

## 1. Introduction

The use of social media has become an inseparable part of the lives of university students in the digital era. The ease of internet access makes digital activities occur almost all the time, both for communication, seeking information, learning, and following various trends that develop very rapidly. The report of the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) shows that the number of internet users in Indonesia continues to increase every year, with young age groups, especially university students, being the most active users. This shows that university students today live in an environment that is highly digitally connected, so that social media has a major role in shaping their behavior, mindset, and psychological conditions. TikTok, as one of the largest social media platforms, has become the most widely used application because of the characteristics of its content which are fast, visual, brief, and supported by an algorithm that is able to adjust displays to users' preferences. This condition creates a new pattern of interaction that not only offers entertainment but also affects the cognitive, emotional, and social processes of university students.

One of the psychological phenomena that often emerges as a result of the intensity of the use of social media is Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). This concept refers to feelings of anxiety or worry that other people are experiencing something enjoyable or meaningful without their presence (Przybylski et al., 2013). TikTok, with its constantly changing flow of information and the For You Page (FYP) algorithm that can massively bring up trends, strengthens the tendency for FoMO to emerge among university students. Users feel driven to continuously monitor new developments so as not to be left behind in ongoing digital social conversations or activities. Several studies have shown that FoMO is related to increased stress, difficulty maintaining focus, as well as the tendency for excessive the use of social media (Elhai et al., 2020; Maciel-Saldierna et al., 2024). Among university students, this

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condition may have an effect on psychological well-being, academic performance, and social relations, especially when social media becomes a source of social comparison and existential pressure.

In facing these challenges, self-regulation becomes an important factor that plays a role in helping university students manage their digital behavior. Self-regulation is the individual's ability to regulate thoughts, emotions, and behavior so that they remain aligned with the goals to be achieved (Zimmerman, 2000). In the context of social media, self-regulation includes the ability to limit the time of use, control the urge to keep opening TikTok, and set priorities in daily activities. Previous studies have shown that university students who have high self-regulation tend to be more able to manage time, control digital impulses, and have lower levels of FoMO (Rozgonjuk et al., 2020). Thus, self-regulation can function as psychological protection for university students who are in a digital environment full of information and social pressure.

Although the relationship between self-regulation and FoMO has been widely studied, most previous studies focused on other platforms such as Instagram or Facebook, or on different sample groups such as adolescents or first-year university students. Studies regarding FoMO among TikTok users are still relatively limited, even though this platform has unique characteristics of short, fast, personalized, and highly viral content, which may trigger FoMO in ways that are different from other social media. In addition, university students as active TikTok users have high patterns of use, whether for entertainment, social interaction, or indirect academic needs, so they are in a vulnerable position for the emergence of FoMO and disturbances in self-regulation.

In the context of University X, this phenomenon can be seen from the behavior of university students who intensively use TikTok every day as part of their digital routine. Initial observations show that university students often follow viral trends, engage in challenges, or feel the need to always know content updates so as not to be left behind by their peer environment. This condition is in line with the literature stating that the digital culture of campuses can shape university students' habits of the use of social media (Yanzhuri et al., 2025). Therefore, it is important to understand how self-regulation plays a role in reducing the tendency for FoMO among university students who use TikTok, especially in the context of their academic life and psychological well-being. This study aims to determine the relationship between self-regulation and Fear of Missing Out among university students who use TikTok. The findings of this study are expected to provide an empirical description of the psychological dynamics in the use of social media and to contribute to the study of digital psychology, particularly related to the behavior of university students in an era of rapidly developing technology.

## 2. Literature Review

The development of social media, particularly TikTok, has brought changes in the ways university students interact and obtain information. Content that is presented rapidly, personally, and in a viral manner makes university students continuously exposed to other people's activities in real time. This condition may trigger the emergence of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), namely feelings of anxiety or fear of being left behind from experiences, activities, or information that other people are currently having (Przybylski et al., 2013). FoMO often emerges because of the urge to always be connected and to follow the latest developments on social media. University students who actively use TikTok tend to compare themselves with the content they see, such as the achievements, lifestyles, or social activities of other people. This exposure may lead to feelings of being left behind and psychological pressure, thereby encouraging individuals to continuously open social media in order to continue feeling socially relevant (Sianipar & Kaloeti, 2019). In addition, FoMO is also related to the need for social connectedness that is not optimally fulfilled, as explained in the framework of Self-Determination Theory (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Continuous digital social pressure may have an effect on the psychological well-being of university students. Individuals with high levels of FoMO tend to experience anxiety, stress, and difficulties in controlling the use of social media. Studies have shown that FoMO is related to compulsive behavior in the use of social media and increased anxiety when individuals are unable to access social media (Rozgonjuk et al., 2020; Elhai et al., 2020). This

condition becomes even more relevant on visually based platforms such as TikTok which encourage continuous content consumption. One psychological factor that plays an important role in dealing with such digital social pressure is self-regulation. Self-regulation refers to the individual's ability to consciously control thoughts, emotions, and behavior so that they are aligned with the goals to be achieved (Zimmerman, 2000). Individuals with good self-regulation are able to manage time, resist impulsive urges, and evaluate their behavior reflectively, including in the use of social media (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007).

In the context of university students, self-regulation helps individuals to limit the duration of the use of TikTok, filter the content consumed, and not be easily driven to follow viral trends. Previous studies have shown that university students with high self-regulation tend to use social media in a more balanced manner and are not easily distracted by online social pressure (Yusra & Napitupulu, 2022). Conversely, low self-regulation makes individuals more vulnerable to impulsive behavior and the tendency to experience FoMO (Rozgonjuk et al., 2019). Thus, self-regulation and FoMO have a close relationship in the dynamics of the use of social media TikTok among university students. Self-regulation can be viewed as an internal mechanism that helps individuals manage digital social pressure and minimize the tendency for FoMO. This theoretical framework forms the basis for understanding how university students regulate their digital behavior and maintain psychological well-being amid the high intensity of the use of social media.

### 3. Method

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the relationship between self-regulation and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among university students who use TikTok social media. The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows objective measurement of variables using standardized instruments as well as systematic statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2019). The correlational design was used because the study aims to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between two psychological variables based on numerical data obtained from respondents (Creswell, 2014).

The research participants consisted of 206 active university students of University X aged 18–25 years who used the TikTok application every day. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, namely the selection of samples based on specific criteria that are in accordance with the purpose of the study. This technique was used to ensure that respondents had direct experience in the use of TikTok and were relevant to the measurement of FoMO and self-regulation. Data were collected using two psychological instruments, namely the Short Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SSRQ) developed by Carey et al. (2004) to measure self-regulation, and the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS) developed by Przybylski et al. (2013) to measure FoMO. Both instruments used a five-point Likert scale and had undergone language adaptation and contextual adjustment to Indonesian university students. The instruments were also tested for validity and reliability and were declared feasible to be used in this study.

Data collection was carried out online through Google Forms. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were given informed consent containing information regarding the purpose of the study, participants' rights, and the guarantee of data confidentiality. Completing the questionnaire was voluntary, and the collected data were rechecked to ensure completeness before being analyzed. Data analysis was conducted using Spearman correlation test to determine the relationship between self-regulation and FoMO. This analytical technique was chosen because the research data did not fully meet the assumption of normality; therefore, nonparametric correlation was considered more appropriate. The results of the analysis were used to observe the direction and strength of the relationship between the two variables studied.

#### 4. Result And Discussion

Descriptive analysis was conducted to obtain an initial overview of the two research variables. For the Fear of Missing Out variable, the participants' mean scores showed that most university students were in the moderate category.

##### Description of the Fear of Missing Out Variable

**Tabel 1.** Description of the Fear of Missing Out Variable.

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
X1_total	206	9.00	40.00	22.1505	4.92398

Which means that they quite frequently experience feelings of worry about being left behind when they do not follow activities or information on TikTok. A complete description of the statistical values related to FoMO can be seen in the table describing the FoMO variable in your thesis.

Meanwhile, the self-regulation variable also showed a tendency to fall within the moderate category.

##### Description of the Self-Regulation Variable

**Tabel 2.** Description of the Self-Regulation Variable.

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
X2_total	206	61.00	133.00	98.5097	12.43431

This means that although university students have the ability to regulate themselves, control impulses, and manage the use of social media, this ability is not yet fully optimal in dealing with digital distractions. Detailed results regarding self-regulation can be seen in the table describing the self-regulation variable in your thesis.

Before conducting the test of the relationship between variables, a normality test was conducted using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

##### Results of the Normality Test (One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test)

**Tabel 3.** Results of the Normality Test.

	<b>Statistics</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>sig</b>
X1_total	.138	206	.000
X2_total	.110	206	.000

The testing results showed that both variables were not normally distributed; therefore, the analysis was continued using the Spearman correlation test. The results of the normality test are presented in your thesis in the normality test table.

The Spearman correlation test showed a significant negative relationship between self-regulation and Fear of Missing Out.

##### Results of the Spearman Correlation Test between Fear of Missing Out and Self-Regulation

**Tabel 4.** Results of the Spearman Correlation Test between Fear of Missing Out and Self-Regulation.

		<b>X1_total</b>	<b>X2_total</b>
X1_total	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	-.370
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	206	206
X2_total	Correlation Coefficient	-.370	1000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	206	206

These results mean that the higher the self-regulation ability possessed by university students, the lower their tendency to experience FoMO.

The results of the study showed that there was a significant negative relationship between self-regulation and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among university students who use TikTok. This finding illustrates that university students with higher levels of self-regulation

tend to have lower tendencies of FoMO. In the context of psychology, this is in line with the theory of self-regulation proposed by Zimmerman (2000), which states that self-regulation is the individual's ability to regulate behavior, emotions, and attention so that they are aligned with the goals to be achieved. University students who are able to regulate themselves will be better able to control the urge to continuously monitor social media activities, so that they are not easily carried away by the rapid and repetitive flow of information as on TikTok.

The results of this study are also consistent with previous findings. The study by Rozgonjuk et al. (2020) showed that low self-regulation is related to the tendency of compulsive social media use, which then increases FoMO. Similar results were also found by Handayani and Aviani (2023), who proved that university students who use TikTok and have better self-regulation show lower levels of FoMO. TikTok, as a platform with a rapid and personalized flow of content, strengthens the tendency of FoMO, especially among individuals who are less able to control internal urges. Therefore, self-regulation functions as a protective mechanism that helps university students limit excessive exposure to social media.

In addition, previous research by Elhai et al. (2020) showed that FoMO often appears together with anxiety and problematic smartphone use. University students who are unable to limit their digital activities tend to feel worried about being left behind important information or new trends that are developing. This strengthens the findings of this study that low self-regulation may increase vulnerability to FoMO. Meanwhile, the study by Rahma and Laili (2022) found that self-control is negatively related to the intensity of social media use, which means that the more frequently a person uses social media, the lower their self-control. This finding is relevant to the results of this study because excessive use of TikTok may weaken self-regulation and generate feelings of being left behind.

Thus, the results of this study confirm that self-regulation plays an important role in reducing FoMO among university students who use TikTok. Individuals who are able to regulate emotions, attention, and behavior will be better able to control the intensity of social media use and will not easily be influenced by digital social pressure. This study also provides an understanding that intensive use of TikTok may potentially lead to dependence and social anxiety if it is not balanced with adequate self-regulation abilities. This description enriches the discussion related to digital psychology and shows that self-regulation is a protective factor that needs to be developed in university students so that they are able to adapt to the dynamics of social media that continue to grow.

## 5. Conclusions and Suggestions

This research shows that self-regulation plays an important role for students in dealing with the rapid flow of information on social media, especially TikTok. In the midst of a fast-paced digital environment full of social pressure, the ability to regulate oneself helps individuals remain in control without having to be constantly connected. Self-regulation is not only related to the pattern of social media use but also reflects how a person manages attention, emotions, and impulses in their life. The results of this research emphasize that FoMO is not merely an impact of technological development but is related to an individual's internal ability to regulate boundaries and responses to the digital world. Students who have better self-regulation tend to be able to maintain psychological balance even when exposed to endless content. Thus, this research highlights the importance of strengthening self-regulation as part of digital literacy competence that needs to be possessed by today's young generation. In addition to providing new understanding, this research also enriches the study of digital psychology by showing that internal psychological factors can protect individuals from the pressure of social media use. These findings can serve as a basis for educational institutions and practitioners to develop programs that help students improve their ability to regulate themselves so that the use of social media can take place in a healthier manner and does not trigger anxiety about being left behind.

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