

FOMO AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH : THE ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND PIK-R IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on youth mental health and identity development in the context of social media use. Utilizing a literature review method, the research analyzes recent studies on FoMO, youth psychological well-being, and school-based interventions through digital approaches. The primary objective is to explore the roles of Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers and peer counselors within the PIK-R program in addressing FoMO among youth. Thematic analysis reveals that an effective response to FoMO requires the integration of digital literacy education, identity reinforcement, and emotional support systems. BK teachers play a strategic role in facilitating discussions on self-esteem and social comparison, while PIK-R functions as a peer-based platform that fosters empathetic engagement. Together, these components form a contextual and accessible support network for youth facing digital pressures. This study concludes by proposing a practical, school-based framework that integrates digital and psychosocial approaches to manage FoMO effectively.

Keywords: Digital literacy; FoMO; School counselor; PIK-R; youth mental health

1. Introduction

The transition period from childhood to adulthood, generally between the ages of 10 and 24 years and starting to find themselves and their social roles in society is called adolescence (S. Fauziah et al., 2020; Isroani, 2023). Significant changes in biological, psychological, and social aspects, as well as a vulnerable period because individuals are greatly influenced by social pressure, the need for acceptance, and the formation of self-image. Characteristics of adolescents The Baby Boomer Generation (1946–1964) is known for being traditional and long-term commitment. Generation X (1965–1980) are more independent and pragmatic adolescents. The Millennial Generation (1981–1996) adolescents tend to be idealistic, collaborative, and open to technology, Generation Z (1997–2012) are digital addicts who have lived with the virtual world since early on (Mayer et al., 2020).

Haime & Biddle (2025) revealed that teenagers are very accustomed to multitasking, very technologically adaptive, unlike the previous generation, today's teenagers who are Gen-Z grow and develop in a social environment full of notifications, the latest posts, and trend storms (Ainaya, 2024; Ilahi & Tungga, 2024; Rizaldi et al., 2025), the current generation lives in a digital current that continues to move. Social media is now no longer just a communication tool, but has become a space for expression, personal branding, and a flexing container that shapes the way teenagers interpret themselves and their environment (Kasuda & Mahendra, 2024; Taib et al., 2024; Yunikawati et al., 2024). Staring at the screen replaces face-to-face, while the demands to continue to be present online are getting stronger. As the most vulnerable and exposed age group, teenagers face pressure to be digitally validated, making their existence highly dependent on social recognition in cyberspace (Hukunala & Nahuway, 2024).



This phenomenon creates a worrying paradox, feeling “connected” digitally, but actually becoming more distant from oneself and the real environment (Isnri et al., 2021). In this context, the digital world demands that educators and adolescent companions be more responsive in helping them deal with increasingly complex psychosocial pressures. One form of psychosocial pressure that has emerged is the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) phenomenon, namely social anxiety due to feeling left behind in following trends or social activities displayed on digital media.

Teenagers are afraid of being left behind if they don't see their friends' stories, feel embarrassed and have to follow other people's lifestyles, and even feel anxious if they don't have internet access (Jannah, 2021). This condition is reinforced by the endless flow of information through platforms such as Instagram, which is now the dominant channel for Gen-Z (Koshy, 2024). The urge to stay connected and up-to-date creates a tendency to compare oneself to others, triggering feelings of inadequacy and being left behind (Hidayanto et al., 2024; Nagari et al., 2023).

The impact is not only disrupting concentration and emotions, but also shaking the process of forming self-identity. When adolescents depend on digital validation for their self-esteem, they become more fragile and easily shaken by online social interactions (Yogiswara et al., 2023). In fact, empirical findings show a positive correlation between FoMO and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and neurotic tendencies (Sachiyati et al., 2023). Ironically, adolescents with high neuroticism tend to use social media to relieve stress, but actually strengthen the FoMO cycle itself (Sartana & Afriyeni, 2019). Thus, FoMO is not a temporary symptom, but a deep psychosocial issue that requires serious intervention.

In this context, schools play a strategic role. Interventions against FoMO are not only aimed at reducing the negative impacts of social media, but also become part of efforts to shape the character, identity, and emotional stability of adolescents (Maya, 2023). Schools should not only be academic spaces, but also psychosocial shelters that support students' mental well-being. Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers play a crucial role in providing counseling services that instill reflective values, build self-confidence, and strengthen students' psychological resilience in the digital context (Mustika et al., 2020; Ningtyas & Wiyono, 2020).

This counseling service is important as a mediation of the impact of social comparison, existential stress, and digital anxiety that often accompany FoMO (Senda et al., 2024). However, this role will be more optimal if accompanied by strengthening digital literacy. Adolescents need to be equipped with the ability to understand how social media algorithms work, sort information critically, and manage their digital presence wisely (Putri, 2024). With these skills, they will not only become passive users, but also conscious individuals who are able to maintain ethics and balance in online interactions (Asyahidda & Azis, 2024).

The synergy between psychosocial counseling by BK teachers and digital literacy curriculum is an important foundation in strengthening the identity and mental well-being of adolescents. One form of implementation of this synergy is through the Youth Information and Counseling Center (PIK-R), a community-based program from BKKBN, managed and intended for adolescents themselves (Sabrina, 2024). PIK-R is not only a place to confide, but also a strategic peer support model that is relevant in responding to psychosocial challenges such as FoMO, social media pressure, and identity crises (Stuke et al., 2025).

During the adolescent development period, peer approaches have been shown to be more effective than adult authority (Rahman et al., 2024), so the existence of PIK-R is very relevant. Collaboration between PIK-R and BK teachers creates an integrated space for reflection, education, and intervention. BK teachers can act as facilitators of reflection and digital literacy, while peer educators deliver messages through media that are close to adolescents' daily lives, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and podcasts. Research shows that this approach is effective in increasing adolescents' self-awareness, empathy, and mental health (Amirullah e

Through this qualitative literature study, the focus of the research is directed at the influence of FoMO on adolescent mental health and the effectiveness of synergy between BK and PIK-R in building a digital-psychosocial-based school framework. With its cheap, flexible, participatory, and community-based nature, PIK-R not only answers local needs but also has the potential to become a global model in dealing with FoMO and strengthening the adolescent psychosocial support system in a sustainable manner.

2. Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a thematic literature study method. This approach was chosen to explore in depth the theoretical understanding and empirical findings related to the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) phenomenon, adolescent mental health, and school-based interventions through the strategic role of Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers and the Youth Information and Counseling Center (PIK-R) (Yani et al., 2025).

Data sources were obtained through systematic searches of indexed national and international scientific journals such as JMIR Public Health and Surveillance, Journal of Adolescent Health, and Scoping Review JAMA Network, as well as relevant local scientific documents, with tailored keywords such as "FoMO", "adolescents and social media", "adolescent mental health", "psychosocial counseling", "digital literacy", and "PIK-R". Inclusion criteria included topic suitability, recency, source credibility, and relevance to the main concepts of the study. The search was conducted using several databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, Scopus, DOAJ and Garuda, with a publication range from 2

The analysis process refers to the thematic analysis guideline according to Mwita & Mwilongo (2025) which includes: repeated reading to understand the contents of the document, systematic data coding, grouping codes into themes, and narrative synthesis to construct a comprehensive understanding. Validity is strengthened through source triangulation and cross-comparison between literatures, to ensure consistency of interpretation and relevance across contexts.

3. Result and Discussion

Based on the thematic literature study approach used in this study, it was found that Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is a complex and internalized form of psychosocial pressure in the daily lives of digital adolescents (Lu et al., 2025). FoMO is not only related to the duration or intensity of social media use, but is more deeply related to socio-emotional aspects such as self-comparison, anxiety about social acceptance, and the constant need for online validation (Karila et al., 2025). Various studies in the Indonesian context show that this pressure has a direct impact on emotional stability (Christina et al., 2019), self-esteem, and the process of forming adolescent self-identity (AndradeFoMO berkembang dalam lingkungan digital yang tidak sehat, di mana karakter konten, algoritma, dan budaya pencitraan memperkuat siklus perbandingan sosial dan ekspektasi yang tidak realistis. Yang et al. (2025) found that

even positive personal content consumption can trigger feelings of being left behind and inadequate, when accompanied by high digital social pressure. In dealing with these conditions, school-based interventions through a digital approach by guidance and counseling teachers are important because they provide a more stable environment and are oriented towards character building and psychosocial support.

In this context, the Youth Information and Counseling Center (PIK-R) and Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers emerge as the main actors in forming an adaptive and transformative psychosocial support system. PIK-R is not just an informal space for sharing stories, but rather a peer mentoring structure that utilizes the emotional closeness and social connectedness typical of Gen-Z. Through a peer-based approach, PIK-R builds a safe space where adolescents can support each other psychologically, discuss their digital experiences, and raise awareness of the dynamics of social media. Research by Rahman et al. (2024) and Dharmayanti et al. (2024) shows that PIK-R encourages increased empathy, communication skills, and emotional resilience of students who are actively involved in it.

Meanwhile, BK teachers not only carry out conventional functions as individual counselors, but also play a strategic role as agents of digital transformation in the school environment. BK teachers become digital literacy facilitators who teach students to recognize algorithms, understand digital ethics, and filter social media content critically. By utilizing digital platforms such as e-counseling, Google Form psychosocial assessment, and interactive reflective content, BK teachers bridge character values with contextual digital skills. Although in the current digital era many teenagers do e-counseling through AI chat bots, this cannot intervene in FoMO (Hidayatullah & Muslihati, 2025). Comparison with a pure digital intervention approach further emphasizes the relevance of the synergy between BK teachers and PIK-R, the role of BK teachers cannot be replaced by AI. Studi oleh Feng dkk (2025) dan Eilert dkk (2022)

revealed that the use of artificial intelligence (AI)-based conversational agents or app-based therapy can help adolescents cope with mild symptoms, but are weak in building authentic emotional closeness. The synergy between BK teachers and PIK-R fills this gap by presenting human interactions that still utilize the use of digital technology. This hybrid approach is an advantage because it combines the power of technology with mutually reinforcing social relations. Furthermore, the effectiveness of this approach has also proven to be relevant internationally, especially in developing countries. Wani et al. (2024) emphasize that mental health interventions in low-income countries require community-based solutions that are cheap, flexible, and adaptive to local contexts.

In intervening FoMO, guidance and counseling teachers can provide direct services, such as individual counseling for students who show withdrawn behavior due to social anxiety (Renita et al., 2024), group guidance and counseling with topics of social comparison, self-concept, and digital literacy (Daniswara & Setiawati, 2024; Riantika, 2024), as well as classical guidance aimed at building and improving adolescent self-identity (Fitri & Muryono, 2024; Uswatun Hasanah, 2024)

Direct services enhance emotional interactions, teacher-student empathy for adolescents, and help adolescents recognize and manage psychosocial stress in real time, thereby re-establishing real social connections that have been weakened by the dominance of digital interactions.

Collaboration between BK and PIK-R, through structures embedded in the school environment, carried out in a participatory manner, and culturally relevant, can be a more youth-friendly intervention

approach. This approach is also supported by findings showing that social determinants such as educational infrastructure, access to technology, and school environmental support greatly influence adolescents' vulnerability to mental disorders. The overall synthesis of literature in this study supports the formulation of a digital-psychosocial school framework that places the roles of BK and PIK-R teachers as equal and complementary. In this framework, BK teachers act as directors of reflective strategies and digital literacy, while PIK-R carries out the function of adolescent psychosocial education through peer interaction (R. Fauziah, 2021).

School digital guidance and counseling services provide educational content distribution and online counseling space, while students play an active role in shaping digital mental health awareness. Digital literacy capacity building training activities for PIK-R members and BK teachers also need to be carried out periodically through workshops, online training, and cross-school collaboration (Edmawati et al., 2021; Muhammad & Dewantara, 2021; Setiyadi et al., 2025).

In its implementation, this approach can be strengthened by the active involvement of parents and school committees so that interventions do not stop at school, but also penetrate the home and community ecosystems. BK and PIK-R teachers can later conduct mental health campaigns on social media platforms (Amirullah et al., 2025). Integration of mental health curriculum, cross-subject teacher training, and provision of a national digital platform for e-counseling can strengthen digital guidance and counseling services. With its community-based, low-cost, and flexible characteristics in method and medium, this model shows its capacity not only as a local strategy that successfully responds to FoMO in Indonesia, but also as a form of systemic innovation that is worthy of being developed globally in strengthening psychosocial support for adolescents based on education and technology.

4. Conclusions

The Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) phenomenon is a psychosocial pressure on adolescents in the digital era, disrupting emotional stability, affecting the quality of social attachment and the process of forming self-identity. To respond to this challenge, school-based interventions with a digital approach that combines the role of Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers and the Youth Information and Counseling Center (PIK-R) have proven effective because both offer a contextual, collaborative, and easily accessible approach for adolescents.

BK teachers act as catalysts for digital transformation in schools by encouraging reflective awareness and strengthening students' digital literacy through integrated face-to-face and online services. Direct services such as individual counseling, group counseling, and classical guidance remain the main foundation in assisting adolescents in dealing with digital social pressures through emotional connections, and safe spaces to develop healthy self-identities amidst online cultural pressures.

In addition, BK teachers should have official social media accounts that can be a communicative psychosocial education media that is appropriate for teenagers who are close to social media. The account can be used to convey reflective educational content models, digital literacy campaigns, and socialization of student-friendly counseling services. Cooperation with parents pays attention to impactful recommendations aimed at school institutions so that they can carry out their roles and functions as educational and consulting institutions in a sustainable and quality manner.

On the other hand, PIK-R must also be involved as a peer-based safe space that facilitates discussion and psychosocial support using language and media that are appropriate to the characteristics of Gen-Z. It is recommended that schools in Indonesia actively integrate synergies between BK and PIK-R services into the school guidance and counseling system formally and continuously. Local governments and education offices also need to expand the capacity of BK teachers through digital and psychosocial literacy training, and strengthen the existence of PIK-R as a strategic part of youth mentoring services.

With its community-based, low-cost, and flexible characteristics, PIK-R is a local solution that not only answers the contextual needs of Indonesian youth but also has the potential to become a global model.

This approach is worthy of being widely adopted in education systems in various countries, especially in areas with limited mental health professionals. Strengthening the synergy between BK and PIK-R not only answers the problem of FoMO as a digital phenomenon, but also becomes a strategic investment in building a young generation that is emotionally, socially, and digitally resilient in a changing world.

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