

# Fear of Missing Out as a transdiagnostic mechanism: A systematic literature review

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to integrate the role of FoMO as both a mediator and moderator and to place the model within a transdiagnostic perspective. The approach used in this study was a Systematic Literature Review using the PRISMA 2020 protocol and analyzed through a thematic synthesis approach. Thirty-three scientific articles published between 2016 and 2026 were analyzed. The analysis found that FoMO consistently acts as a psychological mechanism linking factors with various maladaptive outcomes. These factors include anxiety, stress, and social media use, while maladaptive outcomes include digital addiction, social media fatigue, and decreased psychological well-being. FoMO functions as a mediator between social media use and mental health, also participating in a mediation model with protective variables such as mindfulness and self-control. Furthermore, FoMO has been associated with various psychological disorders across various populations and contexts. This confirms that FoMO has transdiagnostic characteristics. Based on these findings, interventions based on self-regulation and psychological awareness are needed to reduce the negative impact of FoMO, and further research is needed in a more integrative and longitudinal direction.

**Keywords:** Fear of missing out, digital mental health, social media use, problematic smartphone use, transdiagnostic approach.

## 1 Introduction

The existence of digital technology is very helpful and beneficial in everyday life. However, there are psychological risks that need to be widely understood. Excessive use of social media, for example, is thought to be associated with various mental health indicators. Indicators such as anxiety, depression, stress, and decreased psychological well-being are often found to be associated with excessive social media use (Bottaro & Faraci, 2022; Marciano et al., 2022). One of the growing and increasingly reported problems globally is the phenomenon of digital addiction, including problematic smartphone use and social media addiction (Ndayambaje & Okereke, 2025; Popescu et al., 2022). This issue suggests that it is important to understand the psychological mechanisms that link digital media use to mental health problems.

A concept that has become known and a global issue in this context is Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Alabri (2022), Barry and Wong (2020), and J. Elhai et al. (2020) explains that FoMO is defined as a persistent concern that others are having more enjoyable or meaningful experiences than they are. This involvement with others is related to the need for social connectedness and the fear of social exclusion. This trend leads people to want to monitor what others are doing on social media and other digital platforms, which can lead to increased attachment to those devices and platforms.

Research shows that FoMO is significantly correlated with anxiety, sadness, poor sleep quality, and addiction to mobile phones and social media (L. Li et al., 2020; Sommantico et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2024). For example, FoMO was identified as a mediator in the relationship between positive and negative affect and sleep quality through the mechanism of smartphone addiction (L. Li et al., 2020). In addition, FoMO contributes to worsening psychological distress through social media addiction (Koc et al., 2023). These findings suggest that FoMO is not only a psychological symptom but also serves as an important mechanism linking various risk and outcome variables in digital mental health.

Recent studies have shown that FoMO functions not only as a mediator but also as a moderator in the interaction between psychological characteristics and digital behavior. FoMO acts as a mediator by explaining the mechanisms and reasons behind the influence of one variable on another, such as the relationship between stress and problematic smartphone use (Guan et al., 2023). Meanwhile, as a moderator, FoMO determines the strength or direction of the relationship between two variables, such as in the relationship between social media use and psychological well-being (Andersen et al., 2026; Einstein et al., 2023).

Models that combine the mediating and moderating functions of FoMO under a unified analytical framework, such as moderated mediation and serial mediation, have received emphasis in recent research. This can be

found in research Koc et al. (2023), and Tagliaferri et al. (2025) which shows that simultaneously FoMO can function as a mediator in the correlation between anxiety and smartphone addiction, also influenced by other factors such as mindfulness or self-control. These psychological dynamics show that cognitive, emotional, and social aspects work together.

The focus of research into the underlying causes of various psychological problems is no longer limited to specific diagnoses, but rather to the underlying psychological processes. This is based on the assumption of a transdiagnostic approach that emphasizes that various psychological problems share the same underlying mechanisms (Conway et al., 2019; Watkins, 2015). The development of a transdiagnostic approach to psychopathology has also been accompanied by increased attention to FoMO. Bonfanti et al. (2023) and Servidio et al. (2025) found that FoMO is linked to various psychological conditions such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and digital addiction. Dou et al. (2023) found that FoMO also mediates the relationship between social support and psychological well-being. FoMO may also strengthen the relationship between stress and problematic social media use (Cheng et al., 2023). These findings suggest that FoMO can be viewed as a transdiagnostic mechanism.

In the specific context of digital mental health, or in general for understanding mental health, a transdiagnostic approach is considered to provide a sufficiently integrative conceptual framework. A study conducted by Frei et al. (2024) and Holt et al. (2026) show that psychological processes such as emotional regulation, metacognition, and social needs have a role across disorders. In addition, several studies have shown that FoMO has the potential to be a core mechanism in a transdiagnostic model of digital mental health. Guan et al. (2023) and H. Zhang (2024) prove that FoMO is correlated with many risk factors, including insecure attachment, reduced self-control, and cognitive distortions associated with technology use.

Although the studies above strongly indicate FoMO as a transdiagnostic mechanism, there is still disagreement in the literature regarding whether FoMO is the primary cause of mental health problems or a consequence of these conditions. Bonfanti et al. (2023) shows that FoMO appears as a result of loneliness and lack of social support, while other studies show that FoMO actually acts as a worsening factor anxiety and depression through excessive use of social media (Ashiru et al., 2023). Longitudinal research conducted by Hartanto et al. (2024) They even found that the relationship between FoMO and well-being is dynamic and interconnected. These differing study findings suggest that more systematic research is needed to comprehensively understand FoMO in the context of digital mental health.

Against this background, the purpose of this study is to integrate the role of FoMO in digital mental health, both as a mediator, moderator, and positioned as a transdiagnostic mechanism. The study was conducted by reviewing empirical literature published between 2016 and 2026, covering studies discussing the use of digital technology, including social media use, smartphones, and the internet.

Theoretically, this study is expected to provide clarity on the integration of the mediating and moderating roles of FoMO, thereby enriching our understanding of the psychological mechanisms involved in digital mental health. Practically, the results can be used as an alternative basis for developing interventions based on digital well-being.

## 2 Method

This study examines empirical evidence on the role of FoMO as a mediator, moderator, and transdiagnostic mechanism in digital mental health. The design used for the synthesis was Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The review process was conducted with reference to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) in an effort to maintain transparency, replicability, and methodological rigor.

The literature to be reviewed was searched using the Scopus database. This database was selected based on its extensive publication coverage in reputable international journals in the field of psychology. The keywords and boolean operators used are; ("fear of missing out" OR FoMO) AND ("mental health" OR anxiety OR depression OR "psychological well-being" OR wellbeing OR stress) AND ("social media" OR "social networking sites" OR "internet use" OR smartphone). The article search was limited to publications published between January 2016 and March 2026, limited to the field of psychology, final articles from journals, in English, and open access. The articles collected are the results of studies that discuss FoMO in the context of digital mental health, which includes use of social media, smartphones, and the internet.

In an effort to maintain the relevance and quality of the studies to be analyzed, it is necessary to establish inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria used in this study are: (1) empirical studies using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed designs; (2) through a peer-review process; (3) explicitly examining FoMO in relation to mental health, digital behavior, or psychological processes. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria are: (1) not empirical in nature (e.g., editorials, opinion pieces, or conceptual articles without data); (2) not measuring FoMO directly; (3) not relevant to the context of digital mental health; or (4) duplication.

The selection process was carried out in stages. The

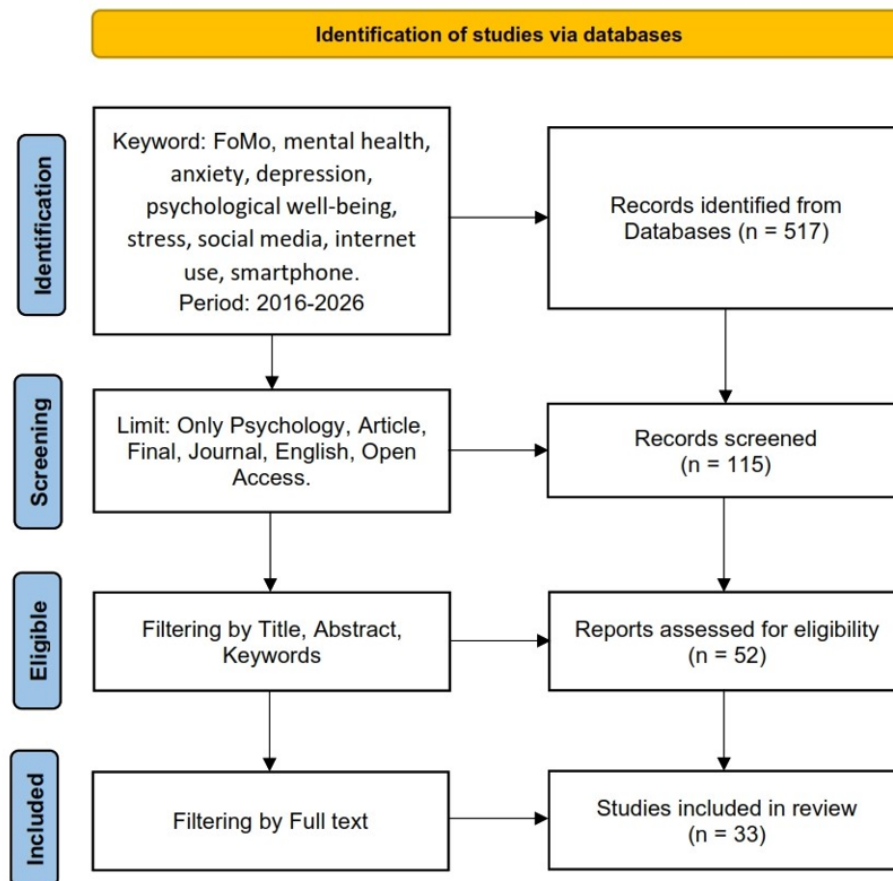


Figure 1: PRISMA Flowchart of the Article Selection Process

first stage, screening, identified the relevance of the title and abstract to the topic discussed in this study. The second stage, a full text evaluation, was conducted to assess its contribution to the study's focus. The entire selection process resulted in 33 articles for review. Data analysis in this study was conducted using a thematic synthesis approach.

### 3 Results

#### 3.1 Theme 1: FoMO as a Key Mediator in Digital Mental Health

The significance of FoMO as a crucial mediator bridging the interaction between psychological factors and various types of maladaptive digital behaviors is one of the most consistent findings. FoMO is a psychological mechanism linking excessive technology use, emotional distress, and unmet social needs. These results imply that FoMO is an active psychological process that communicates the impact of predictor variables on mental health outcomes, not simply a symptom.

FoMO consistently modulates the relationships between anxiety, stress, social exclusion, and entertainment motivation with outcomes such as problematic smartphone use, social media addiction, depression, and

sleep disturbance, according to the empirical investigation in Table 1. These results imply that the relationship between psychological distress and maladaptive digital activities is explained by FoMO.

These results demonstrate that FoMO is a reliable and potent mediator across a variety of psychological models. This function encompasses multiple, indirect, and direct mediation, reflecting the complexity of the underlying psychological processes.

#### 3.2 Theme 2: Moderated Mediation Model (Mediation-Moderation Integration)

Moderated mediation, or a combination of mediation and moderation, is a more complex model than the basic mediation model, according to recent findings in the digital mental health literature. This method allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how and when FoMO influences psychological consequences, taking into account the circumstances that amplify or mitigate those effects.

A number of recent studies have shown that FoMO not only functions as a mediator, but also under certain circumstances is moderated by factors such as mindfulness, social norms, self-regulation, and personality traits, as summarized in Table 2. These results imply that FoMO is a psychological mechanism that is conditional and

Table 1: FoMO as a Mediator

Author & Year	Predictor Variables	Outcome Variable	Additional Mediating Variables	Types of Mediation	Key Findings
1 Dempsey et al. (2019)	Social anxiety	Problematic use of Facebook	Rumination	Serial	FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) and rumination mediate the relationship between social anxiety and problematic Facebook use.
2 Gao et al. (2023)	Social exclusion	Symptoms of depression	Phubbing	Serial	FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) increases phubbing behavior (looking for partners too closely), which then worsens depression.
3 Sever and Ozdemir (2022)	Stress, entertainment motivation	Problematic smartphone use	–	Direct	FoMO directly mediates the influence of stress and entertainment motivation on smartphone addiction.
4 Swiatek et al. (2021)	Inherent anxiety	Social media fatigue	–	Direct	FoMO as a partial mediator between anxiety and social media fatigue.
5 Yu and Zhang (2023)	Social media addiction	Sleep problems	Social media use at night	Serial	FoMO → nighttime use → sleep disturbance
6 Wu et al. (2025)	Causes of FoMO (e.g. social pressure)	Online social anxiety	Irrational procrastination, media multitasking.	Serial	FoMO triggers procrastination and multitasking which increases online social anxiety.
7 Tanrikulu and Mouratidis (2023)	Social anxiety, life aspirations	School involvement	–	Direct	FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) reduces engagement in school by increasing social anxiety.
8 Zhu et al. (2024)	Internet addiction	Interpersonal sensitivity/anxiety	–	Direct (network mediation)	FoMO as a central node connecting internet addiction and social anxiety.
9 Tandon et al. (2022)	Use of social media	Phubbing & psychological impact	–	Direct	FoMO explains the relationship between social media use and phubbing (ignoring your partner because you are too close to the man who is using your services).
10 van der Schyff et al. (2022)	Self-presentation	Excessive use of Instagram	Phubbing	Serial	FoMO → phubbing → excessive use of Instagram
11 Tao et al. (2024)	Online learning exposure	Smartphone addiction & social anxiety	–	Direct (longitudinal)	FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) reinforces the development of addiction and anxiety symptoms over time.

contextual.

These results suggest that a more comprehensive understanding of FoMO's role in digital mental health can be gained using a moderated mediation model. In addition to mediating the relationship between predictor and outcome variables, FoMO functions under specific circumstances influenced by risk and protective factors.

### 3.3 Theme 3: FoMO as a Moderator in the Mental Health Relationship

Recent research suggests that, in addition to acting as a mediator, FoMO also functions as a moderator, dramatically altering the strength and direction of the relationship between digital media consumption and mental health outcomes. In this sense, FoMO indicates when and under what circumstances an effect becomes

stronger or weaker, and explains how this occurs.

FoMO moderates the relationship between social media use, problematic internet use, and several mental health markers, including anxiety, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction, according to several studies (Table 3). This implies that the effect of technology use on mental health is determined by a conditional variable called FoMO. The role of FoMO as a moderator in the digital-mental health relationship is dynamic and contextual, influenced by individual, social, and developmental factors. FoMO can exacerbate the negative impact of technology use in some circumstances, but in others it can also be adaptive by improving social relationships and life satisfaction.

Theme 4: Predictors, Social Context, and Transdiagnostic Perspectives on FoMO

Table 2: Moderated Mediation Model

Author & Year	Mediating Variables	Moderator Variables	Results	Model Type	Implications
1 Yao et al. (2026)	FoMO (implicit in the mechanism of social media fatigue)	Full awareness (dispositional)	Social media fatigue	Moderated mediation	Mindfulness weakens the negative impact of FoMO → fatigue, serving as a psychological protective factor.
2 Meng et al. (2025)	FoMO	– (weak/implicit moderation via conditional models)	Problematic use of mobile phones	Moderated mediation	FoMO strengthens the link between anxiety and problematic mobile phone use under certain conditions.
3 Sirisety et al. (2025)	FoMO	– (analysis of conditions required)	Psychological well-being	Conditional/quasi-moderate model	FoMO is an essential condition (a necessary condition) that determines psychological well-being.
4 Kovan et al. (2024)	FoMO (serial mediation)	Self-control, responsibility	Social media addiction	Serial moderation mediation	Self-control and responsibility weaken the FoMO → addiction pathway, demonstrating the important role of self-regulation.
5 Astleitner et al. (2023)	FoMO, ghosting, vaguebooking	Personality traits	Mental health outcomes	Moderated serial mediation	Personality strengthens/weakens the FoMO → mental disorder pathway through digital social experiences.

Table 3: FoMO as a Moderator

Author & Year	Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	Direction of Moderation	Effect Conditions	Interpretation
1 Einstein et al. (2023)	Use of social media	Anxiety	Reinforcement (positive amplification)	Significant impact on adolescents with high levels of FoMO	FoMO magnifies the impact of social media use on anxiety; at low levels of FoMO, the relationship becomes weaker/insignificant.
2 Andersen et al. (2026)	Aspects of social media use (duration, interaction)	Mental health issues & life satisfaction	Strengthening & weakening (double effect)	Varies depending on the type of usage & level of FoMO (Fear of Missing Out)	High levels of FoMO exacerbate the negative impacts of social media use; under certain conditions, its effects on life satisfaction become non-linear.
3 Swinkels et al. (2025)	Problematic internet use	Mental health (longitudinal)	Time-dependent amplification	Effects appear in time dynamics (cross-delayed)	FoMO increases the long-term impact of problematic internet use on mental health.
4 Dai et al. (2026)	Developmental factors (e.g. social experiences, digital use)	Child psychological outcomes (well-being/adjustment)	Reinforcement (developmental sensitivity)	Stronger at certain FoMO level transitions (latent states)	FoMO acts as a developmental moderator; its effects vary depending on the child's developmental stage.

This section summarizes empirical research on predictors of FoMO, the social environments that influence it, and its function as a transdiagnostic mechanism in digital mental health. This synthesis suggests that FoMO is a cross-disorder mechanism linking multiple psychological aspects and maladaptive behaviors, beyond being a

social media-specific phenomenon.

### 3.3.1 FoMO Predictor Factors

According to several studies, FoMO is influenced by various intrapersonal and interpersonal circumstances. Key data regarding demographics, psychological outcomes, and predictors of FoMO are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: FoMO in a Transdiagnostic Perspective

Author & Year	Population	Predictor Factors	Psychological Results	Context	Study Contribution
1 Elsayed (2025)	Student	Intensity of social media use	Well-being, academic achievement	Digital	Demonstrating FoMO as a mechanism linking social media use and academic well-being.
2 Covelli et al. (2025)	Young adults	Social influence, meaningful relationships	Instagram Addiction	Social-digital	Emphasizes the role of social influence in triggering FoMO and Instagram addiction.
3 Davis et al. (2023)	Young adults	Status seeking, intra-sexual competition	Social support, sociosexuality	Social	Connecting FoMO with the dynamics of social competition and the need for status.
4 Durao et al. (2023)	Old	Emotional intelligence, attachment	Psychological adjustment	Clinical-social	Extending the study of FoMO to older adults and relational contexts.
5 J. D. Elhai et al. (2016)	Mature	Anxiety, depression	Problematic smartphone use	Clinical-digital	Early studies linked FoMO to psychological disorders and digital addiction.
6 J. D. Elhai et al. (2025)	Mature	Worry	Problematic use of smartphones and social media	Clinical-digital	Strengthening the role of FoMO as a key factor in anxiety-based digital addiction.
7 Faulhaber et al. (2023)	Student	Self-monitoring of social media usage	Psychological well-being	Digital	Shows that self-control can reduce FoMO and improve well-being.
8 Gomez-Munoz and Baelo (2026)	Student	Smartphone usage	Problematic smartphone use	Digital	Confirming a close relationship between FoMO and problematic smartphone use.
9 Medina and Marin (2026)	Teenager	Nomophobia	Anxiety (state-trait)	Clinical-digital	Showing FoMO as part of the digital anxiety spectrum.
10 Metin-Orta (2020)	Student	Internet addiction	Psychological symptoms	Clinical-digital	FoMO is directly related to common psychological symptoms.
11 Rottinger et al. (2021)	Mature	FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) is dispositional and online-specific.	Internet use disorder (IUD)	Clinical-digital	Dividing FoMO into trait vs. situational types strengthens the transdiagnostic approach.
12 Tandon et al. (2020)	Mature	Social media use (sleep disturbance)	Sleep problems	Digital	FoMO is associated with sleep disturbances due to social media.
13 X. Zhang et al. (2026)	Student	Nomophobia, social media addiction	Mental health symptoms	Clinical-digital	Network analysis shows FoMO as a key node in various disorders.

Based on Table 4, predictors of FoMO can be grouped into three main categories. The first category is emotional and cognitive factors that consistently contribute to the emergence of FoMO. These factors include anxiety, depression, and worry (J. D. Elhai et al., 2016, 2025). Second category, study Covelli et al. (2025) and Davis et al. (2023) show that social influence, interpersonal relations and social competition which are social factors also have a significant role important. While the third category is self-regulation factors and psychological capacities such as emotional intelligence and self-monitoring show a protective effect against FoMO (Durao et al., 2023; Faulhaber et al., 2023). This suggests that FoMo is not only triggered by psychological deficits but is also influenced by an individual's ability to manage emotions and digital behavior.

### 3.3.2 FoMO in Social and Behavioral Context

On kin a broader social context, especially in digital interactions, FoMO can be said to function as a psychological mechanism that internalizes social pressure in digital environments. This is shown in studies Covelli et al. (2025) which found that social influence and the quality of interpersonal relationships significantly trigger FoMO, which ultimately increases the risk of Instagram addiction.

Another study conducted by Davis et al. (2023) the link between FoMO and the dynamics of status-seeking and social competition demonstrates a broader understanding of FoMO as a phenomenon not only based on anxiety but also related to social motivation and self-identity. This is demonstrated by FoMO reflecting the drive to maintain social standing through active partici-

pation in digital activities.

In the behavioral realm, FoMO can be said to function as a link between the subjective experience of anxiety and compulsive digital behavior. FoMO is associated with a number of maladaptive behaviors in the behavioral domain, including excessive social media use, smartphone addiction, and difficulty sleeping (Gomez-Munoz & Baelo, 2026; Tandon et al., 2020). Even Medina and Marin (2026) in his study, he found that in the context of nomophobia, FoMO contributes to increased anxiety at both the state and trait levels.

### 3.3.3 FoMO as a Transdiagnostic Mechanism

Identifying FoMO as a transdiagnostic mechanism represents a significant contribution to the literature. From this perspective, FoMO is not a disorder in itself, but rather a psychological process underlying a number of mental conditions. The study's findings X. X. Zhang et al. (2026) which used network analysis showed that FoMO is a central node connecting nomophobia, social media addiction, and other mental health symptoms.

In line with this network approach, the literature on transdiagnostics emphasizes the importance of core symptoms that can bridge the various disorders that arise (Chavez-Baldini et al., 2023; Noda et al., 2025). FoMO in this context can be understood as a symptom that serves to bridge depression, anxiety, and digital addictive behavior.

The study conducted by Rottinger et al. (2021) strengthening the transdiagnostic approach by distinguish between dispositional (trait) FoMO and situational (state) FoMO. Dispositional FoMO is thought to reflect a person's innate tendencies, while situational FoMO is thought to be triggered by specific digital contexts. This distinction means that interventions can focus on both the trait and situational levels.

The argument that FoMO is a relevant cross-disorder mechanism in various populations and contexts is strengthened by the findings Metin-Orta (2020) and J. D. Elhai et al. (2016) which shows that FoMO is directly related to anxiety and depression as common psychological symptoms.

The findings summarized in Table 4 indicate that FoMO can be explained as a complex, multidimensional, and cross-contextual psychological mechanism. FoMO not only functions as a mediator or moderator, but also acts as a central node in a digital psychopathology network that connects various risk factors and mental health outcomes.

## 4 Discussion

The analysis conducted in this study indicates that FoMO is a complex and multifunctional psychological construct. FoMO acts as a mediator, moderator, and

transdiagnostic mechanism in various contexts of digital behavior and mental health. The results of the analysis can be explained in four ways.

First, FoMO acting as a key mediator in the relationship between psychological factors and maladaptive digital behavior can be stated as a consistent finding. Several reviewed studies indicate that the relationship between social anxiety, stress, and problematic social media use is mediated by FoMO (Dempsey et al., 2019; J. Elhai et al., 2020). The need for social connectedness paradigm can be used to explain this mechanism. In this paradigm, individuals with high levels of social anxiety or insecurity are more likely to develop FoMO in response to the threat of social exclusion (Alabri, 2022). This suggests that FoMO can be defined as a psychological mechanism that transforms emotional distress into compulsive digital behavior, rather than simply a symptom.

The complexity of FoMO's role is further reinforced by findings on serial mediation. FoMO also plays a role as part of a broader cognitive-affective network, rather than operating in isolation. This is demonstrated in studies Dempsey et al. (2019) which states that FoMO and rumination have mediated the relationship between social anxiety and problematic Facebook use. FoMO can also be said to have a fairly strong relationship with mobile phone addiction, strengthening its validity as a key mediator in maladaptive digital behavior (Y. Zhang et al., 2023).

However, this pattern is not entirely consistent across studies. Some longitudinal studies have identified a reciprocal relationship between poor social media use and FOMO (Y. Li et al., 2024). This suggests a two-way relationship between FoMO and problematic social media use. These findings indicate that FoMO is not only a cause, but also a consequence or impact of excessive social media use. Therefore, to explain the dynamics of FoMO, a linear causal model alone is not sufficient; a longitudinal approach is essential to understanding this phenomenon.

Second, in the moderated-mediation theme, it was found that both contextual and individual factors significantly influence the role of FoMO. The study results Yao et al. (2025) for example, it found that mindfulness acts as a protective factor that can reduce the negative impact of FoMO on social media fatigue. These findings also relate to other studies showing that self-regulation and self-awareness can reduce the negative impact of technology use (Fioravanti et al., 2025). On the other hand, social pressure can amplify the effects of FoMO, potentially increasing the risk of digital addiction.

The role of additional moderating variables such as self-control and positive parenting patterns can be explained by the fact that the relationship between FoMO and psychological outcomes depends on individual and

environmental circumstances, meaning that the relationship is not universal (Yuan et al., 2024). So to understand the FoMO phenomenon, as suggested by Tandon(2021) in his systematic review study, it was found that using a biopsychosocial approach was important.

Third, regarding the relationship between social media use and psychological well-being, FoMO's role as a moderator shows a non-linear pattern of effects. This is based on a study conducted by Riordan(2021) shows that at low levels of FoMO, social media use tends to negatively impact well-being, while at high levels of FoMO, these effects can be more complex or even adaptive under certain conditions. These findings certainly challenge the common assumption that FoMO is always maladaptive. Other studies have also shown that FoMO has both adaptive and maladaptive potential, depending on the context and intensity. Therefore, FoMO can be understood as a double-edged construct. For example, in some cases, FoMO can increase feelings of social connectedness by increasing social engagement and digital participation. However, over time, these effects are accompanied by increased anxiety and psychological exhaustion (Karsay et al., 2023).

Fourth, from a transdiagnostic perspective, it was found that FoMO can function as a mechanism in the emergence of various psychological conditions. Research conducted by J. Elhai et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2025) showed that various conditions such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and internet use disorder are associated with FoMO. The results of this study indicate a similar view with the transdiagnostic paradigm in psychopathology, which emphasizes that several psychological mechanisms underlie the emergence of various disorders (Chavez-Baldini et al., 2023). Apart from that, the network analysis study conducted shows that FoMO can function as a central node that connects various psychological symptoms and digital behavior (X. Zhang et al., 2026). Therefore, interventions targeting FoMO have the potential to have a broad impact on various aspects of mental health.

The findings of this study, as a whole, confirm that FoMO is a crucial construct in understanding the various dynamics of individual mental health in the digital age. FoMO's multifunctional role as a mediator, moderator, and transdiagnostic mechanism will make it a crucial focus for future research and interventions.

The results of this study certainly have several limitations that need to be considered. Some of these limitations are that of the studies analyzed, the majority used a descriptive design cross-sectional which limits ability to draw causal conclusions. In addition, some studies are susceptible to subjective bias by respondents and social desirability because depends on self-report. Challenges also arise related to variations in FoMO mea-

surements, especially in distinguishing between trait and state FoMO (Rottinger et al., 2021).

The lack of population diversity is also a limitation of this study. The studies analyzed primarily used adolescents and college students, limiting their generalizability to other populations, such as the elderly or clinical groups. Although some studies have shown that FoMO is also relevant for broader populations (Duraio et al., 2023).

## 5 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that FoMO is a psychological mechanism that can bridge the relationship between psychological, social, and digital behavioral factors and various mental health outcomes. The findings of this study further expand our understanding of the FoMO phenomenon, recognizing that FoMO is a dynamic part of a complex psychological system. Therefore, its function is not limited to being a simple intermediary variable.

This study specifically found that FoMO consistently acts as a significant mediator linking predictor variables to various forms of maladaptive behavior. Stress, anxiety, and social pressure were found to be associated with social media addiction, problematic smartphone use, and sleep disturbances. The existence of a chain mediation model indicates that the effects of FoMO are often reinforced through additional mechanisms such as procrastination, multitasking, and phubbing. The influence of FoMO in the moderated mediation approach was also found to be non-universal, but rather influenced by protective factors such as mindfulness and self-regulation. Furthermore, there are risk factors such as social pressure and individual personality characteristics.

Other findings also suggest that FoMO functions as a non-linear moderator in the relationship between social media use and psychological well-being. In certain situations, FoMO can act as a reinforcement of the negative impacts of social media use on anxiety and mental health. However, in other situations, FoMO can serve an adaptive function by increasing social connectedness and life satisfaction. These results support the notion that FoMO is ambiguous and dependent on social and personal circumstances.

The results of this study also confirm that FoMO, when viewed from a transdiagnostic perspective, is related to a number of psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and nomophobia. The FoMO phenomenon also appears in various populations and contexts. These results suggest that in understanding mental health dynamics in the digital age, FoMO can be positioned as a relevant cross-disorder mechanism. The contribution of this study is the offer of an integrative framework for developing psychology that positions

FoMO as a crucial construct for explaining the complex interactions between individuals, technology, and mental health.

## 6 Implications

Based on the results of this study, the integration of mediation, moderation, and transdiagnostic models within a comprehensive conceptual framework is essential for future research. To encourage the development of network-based integrative models in the study of digital mental health, a perspective on FoMO as a dynamic mechanism that can interact with various psychological and social factors is needed. More robust longitudinal and experimental studies are also needed to test the causal relationship between FoMO and psychological outcomes. Another important consideration is exploring cultural factors and social contexts more broadly to understand the diversity of the FoMO phenomenon globally. Practically, the results of this study suggest that reducing the negative impact of FoMO requires interventions focused on self-regulation, mindfulness, or digital literacy. Meanwhile, school-based intervention programs can also be implemented by targeting increasing individual awareness of social media usage patterns and developing adaptive coping strategies.

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