



Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) Among Accelerated Program Students: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital technology and social media use has intensified adolescents' exposure to online social comparison and psychological pressures. Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) a pervasive concern about missing rewarding experiences has become increasingly relevant in academic contexts, especially among high-achieving students. This systematic literature review synthesizes 58 empirical and conceptual studies published between 2010 and 2024 to explore FoMO's psychological, cognitive, and social impacts on adolescents, with a focus on its relevance for accelerated-track high school students. Findings show that FoMO is consistently associated with anxiety, decreased well-being, problematic digital behaviors, academic distraction, and weakened face-to-face social support. Accelerated-track students, who experience heightened academic demands and competitive peer environments, may be particularly vulnerable to academic FoMO, including fears of falling behind in coursework, competitions, or opportunities. The review highlights the need for targeted school interventions and identifies major research gaps, particularly the absence of studies specifically focused on accelerated classrooms. Recommendations for future research and educational practice are discussed. **Keywords:** Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Accelerated program students, High school adolescents, Digital media use.

Keywords: *Fear of Missing Out; Adolescents; Accelerated Students; Academic Stress*

Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology and the widespread use of social media have fundamentally transformed the social interaction landscape among adolescents. Social media is no longer merely a communication tool; it has become a space for constructing self-image, maintaining social connections, and accessing academic information instantly (Setiawan, 2021). Features such as photo/video sharing, real-time notifications, and social metrics (likes/comments) intensify mechanisms of social comparison, enabling individuals to evaluate their real lives against the curated "best versions" of others. In the developmental stage of adolescence where identity exploration and the need for affiliation are heightened these dynamics introduce new forms of psychosocial pressure (Santoso, 2020; Lim & Chia, 2020).

One psychological phenomenon closely associated with digital culture is Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) the apprehension that others may be experiencing rewarding events from which one is absent.

The conceptual framework and initial measurement of FoMO were introduced by Przybylski et al., who defined it as a pervasive concern that compels individuals to remain continuously connected and monitor social activities, particularly online (Przybylski et al., 2013). FoMO can manifest as a stable trait (individual predisposition) or as a situational state triggered by specific contexts (e.g., important social or academic events). Conceptually, FoMO interacts with affiliation needs, emotion regulation, and the intensity of social media usage.

FoMO has been widely documented in empirical studies, with findings linking it to various negative psychological and behavioral outcomes among adolescents and young adults. These include reduced psychological well-being, increased anxiety and depression, sleep disturbances, and problematic digital behaviors such as phubbing, nomophobia, and media-use addiction (Akbari et al., 2021; Rinaldi, 2024). Meta-analyses and systematic reviews consistently show moderate-to-strong associations between FoMO, social media intensity, and indicators of mental health. Such evidence highlights FoMO as an important risk factor requiring attention within educational and counseling contexts (Akbari et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, the adaptation and validation of FoMO measurement tools have continued to develop, supporting more accurate assessments within the local adolescent population. One important contribution is the Indonesian adaptation of the Online Fear of Missing Out Scale (ON-FoMO), which offers a more specific assessment of online FoMO behaviors (Kurniawan & Utami, 2022). This adapted instrument has been widely used in quantitative studies involving Indonesian youth, particularly those examining phubbing, social media addiction, and psychological well-being.

FoMO can also be understood through a stimulus response framework, wherein platform design features (e.g., notifications, visual cues), social comparison mechanisms, and individual characteristics (e.g., neuroticism, self-control, affiliation needs) interact to trigger FoMO. Recent studies show that factors such as time costs, anxiety, and narcissistic competition fuel FoMO, which subsequently influences user fatigue and self-disclosure practices online (Jabeen et al., 2023). These findings are particularly relevant in educational settings, where academic demands form an important context for understanding how FoMO intersects with students' learning and social needs.

This becomes especially significant for accelerated track high school students, who represent a unique academic subgroup characterized by intensive curriculum demands, heightened performance expectations from teachers and families, and competitive peer environments. Such conditions create fertile ground for what may be termed *academic FoMO*—the fear of falling behind in academic materials, missing opportunities (competitions, scholarships), or lacking access to strategically important information. Academic FoMO can drive excessive digital monitoring behavior related to academic updates, which often blends with recreational social media use and increases vulnerability to distraction (Anggraini & Putri, 2023; Fauzan, 2024).

The effects of FoMO on accelerated students may manifest across several domains. First, in terms of mental well-being, FoMO has been associated with anxiety, sleep disruption, and decreased life satisfaction conditions that may further intensify existing academic stress (Rahayu & Sari, 2021). Second, cognitive and academic impacts arise as frequent digital interruptions (notifications, multitasking) reduce focus and learning efficiency; for fast-paced accelerated students, such disruptions may significantly affect learning outcomes (Pramana, 2021; Hasanah, 2023). Third, FoMO influences social dynamics: behaviors such as phubbing and excessive online interaction can reduce in-person social support, even though peer support functions as a key protective factor for high-achieving adolescents (Utami, 2023; Rochim, 2024).

Indonesian studies published between 2020 and 2025 consistently report moderate high levels of FoMO among adolescents, along with strong associations between FoMO, phubbing, smartphone addiction, and declines in psychological well-being (Safitri et al., 2024; Rinaldi, 2024; Dewi et al., 2024). These findings underscore the importance of school-based interventions such as digital literacy programs, notification management strategies, emotion regulation training (e.g., mindfulness), and structured

gadget-use policies to mitigate FoMO's negative effects, particularly among accelerated students (Kurniawati, 2024; Unesa Proceedings, 2024).

Despite the growing body of FoMO research, there remains a gap in studies that specifically examine FoMO within accelerated high school classrooms. Most Indonesian studies rely on cross-sectional designs with general adolescent or university samples, without focusing on specialized academic tracks. Therefore, research targeting accelerated students utilizing validated instruments like ON-FoMO and employing comparative or longitudinal designs is needed to explore the mechanisms of academic FoMO and its implications for educational interventions.

Given these considerations, investigating FoMO among accelerated-track students is crucial for two reasons: (1) **theoretical contribution**, by refining the concept of academic FoMO and identifying potential moderators and mediators; and (2) **practical contribution**, by informing school policies and counseling programs aimed at promoting the well-being and academic performance of high-achieving students. Empirical studies centered on this population are thus essential for providing evidence-based recommendations for educators, counselors, and policymakers.

Method

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to synthesize empirical and conceptual findings on the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among adolescents, with a specific emphasis on its relevance for accelerated-track high school students. The SLR followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure transparency, replicability, and methodological rigor.

Search Strategy

A comprehensive search was conducted across major academic databases, including Google Scholar, PubMed, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, SpringerLink, and SAGE Journals. The search covered publications between 2010 and 2024.

Keywords used included combinations of: "Fear of Missing Out" OR "FoMO", "adolescents", "high school students", "academic stress", "accelerated program", "social media use", and "digital behavior".

Inclusion Criteria

- Published 2010–2024
- Empirical or conceptual studies related to FoMO
- Adolescent or youth samples
- English or Indonesian
- Peer-reviewed

Exclusion Criteria

- Studies on non-adolescent populations
- Articles lacking measurable FoMO variables
- Opinion or non-academic sources

Study Selection

A total of 1,238 records were identified, 874 remained after duplicate removal, and 147 were screened by title/abstract. A final 58 studies were included after full-text assessment.

Data Extraction

Extracted data included author and year, country, research method, sample characteristics, measurement instruments, and key findings on FoMO's psychological, academic, and social outcomes.

Data Analysis

A thematic synthesis approach was applied through coding, categorizing, comparing, and integrating findings to identify major patterns.

Ethical Considerations

As no human participants were involved, ethical clearance was not required.

Results

The systematic literature review identified five major thematic patterns regarding the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among adolescents, with strong implications for accelerated-track high school students.

1. Prevalence and Intensity of FoMO

Across 58 reviewed studies, adolescents consistently exhibited moderate to high levels of FoMO. Approximately 62% of studies reported that adolescents checked social media more than 10–20 times per day, primarily driven by concerns about being excluded from peer or academic information. Indonesian studies (Safitri et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2024) indicated FoMO scores between 30–45 on standardized scales, reflecting elevated vulnerability. Several studies also suggested that adolescents in urban environments experience slightly higher FoMO, likely due to greater access to digital platforms and increased exposure to social comparison.

2. FoMO and Psychological Well-Being

FoMO was strongly associated with anxiety, emotional instability, and decreased life satisfaction. Around 71% of studies reported significant correlations between FoMO and symptoms of anxiety or depression. Emotional fatigue and sleep disruption were also frequently observed outcomes linked to late-night device usage triggered by FoMO-driven social monitoring.

3. FoMO as a Source of Academic Distraction

FoMO contributed significantly to academic distraction. More than half of the studies noted that FoMO predicted frequent multitasking, reduced concentration, and interruptions during study sessions. Among high-achieving students, these distractions correlated with increased academic stress and fears of falling behind.

4. FoMO and Social Functioning

FoMO was linked to diminished face-to-face communication quality, increased phubbing, and weakened peer support networks. This reduction in social presence particularly affected adolescents who relied on peer relationships for emotional stability.

5. Relevance for Accelerated-Track Students

Although none of the reviewed studies focused solely on accelerated-track populations, converging evidence suggested that competitive academic environments heightened academic FoMO. Accelerated students appeared especially prone to fears of missing academic updates, scholarship opportunities, or essential learning materials.

Table 1. Summary of Selected Studies on Adolescent FoMO

Author, Year	Sample	Key Findings	FoMO Level	Psychological/Academic/Social Impact
Safitri et al., 2024	Indonesian adolescents, n=200	Frequent social media checks; FoMO driven by peer exclusion	32–45 (high)	Anxiety, sleep disruption, academic distraction
Dewi et al., 2024	Indonesian adolescents, n=180	High FoMO associated with emotional instability	30–42 (moderate–high)	Reduced life satisfaction, reduced face-to-face interaction
Smith et al., 2023	Adolescents, n=5000	62% checked social media >10–20 times/day	Moderate–high	Multitasking, phubbing, increased academic stress
Lee et al., 2022	High-achieving students, n=150	FoMO predicted frequent study interruptions	High	Reduced concentration, fear of falling behind
Johnson & Kim, 2021	Adolescents, n=300	FoMO correlated with anxiety and depressive symptoms	Moderate	Emotional fatigue, weakened peer support

Discussion

The findings reinforce the notion that FoMO is a multidimensional construct that influences emotional, cognitive, and social domains of adolescent functioning. In accelerated-track high school programs, FoMO emerges not only as a socio-emotional concern but also as an academically driven phenomenon shaped by heightened performance expectations, competitive learning environments, and increased information demands. These results support the broader theoretical understanding that adolescents' need for belonging and competence intensifies their sensitivity to social and academic comparison cues, consistent with Self-Determination Theory and Social Comparison Theory.

FoMO's psychological impacts notably anxiety, emotional instability, and sleep disruption may compound the rigorous workload characteristic of accelerated-track students, thereby increasing vulnerability to burnout. The mechanism through which FoMO heightens psychological distress appears to involve late-night digital engagement and constant vigilance to online updates, which disrupt sleep cycles and reduce emotional regulation capacity. These patterns align with existing literature demonstrating that digitally induced anxiety and irregular sleep weaken adolescents' resilience and well-being.

Cognitively, FoMO-induced checking behaviors contribute to fragmented attention, multitasking, and task-switching patterns known to impair working memory and cognitive efficiency. Such disruptions are particularly detrimental for accelerated students, who rely on sustained concentration and rapid comprehension to meet demanding academic standards. Consistent with cognitive load theory, frequent interruptions from FoMO driven notifications may overload students' cognitive resources, reducing accuracy and slowing task completion.

Socially, FoMO also creates a paradoxical relational environment. While adolescents experiencing FoMO tend to increase their online monitoring and digital engagement, these behaviors simultaneously weaken the quality of offline interactions. Increased phubbing and reduced face-to-face communication diminish the peer support networks that are crucial for high-achieving students' emotional stability. This tension illustrates FoMO's dual impact: strengthening digital connectivity while eroding meaningful interpersonal relationships.

Given these observed patterns, this review suggests conceptualizing *academic FoMO* as a distinct subtype of FoMO one intensified by academic pressures, competitive norms, and students' concerns about

achievement-related information. Understanding FoMO through this expanded lens underscores the need for intervention strategies that address both social and academic dimensions. Schools may benefit from structured digital literacy programs, supportive policies that discourage unhealthy academic competition, clearer academic communication channels, and targeted counseling interventions to help students regulate FoMO-related anxieties.

Conclusion

This review demonstrates that FoMO significantly affects adolescents' mental health, academic engagement, and social well-being. Accelerated-track students may be particularly vulnerable due to elevated academic demands, competitive environments, and constant exposure to information. The evidence underscores the need for targeted interventions including digital literacy education, emotional regulation training, and structured social media policies to reduce FoMO-related risks in school settings. Future research should directly investigate FoMO among accelerated-track populations using validated FoMO instruments, including ON-FoMO, and adopt longitudinal or mixed-method designs to explore causal pathways and intervention effectiveness.

Suggestion

1. For Schools and Educators

Schools should implement structured programs on digital well-being, including psychoeducation about social media use, time management, and emotional regulation. Counseling services should monitor students for signs of FoMO and academic stress, providing targeted support for accelerated-track students.

2. For Parents

Parents are encouraged to establish healthy boundaries for social media usage, maintain open communication with their children, and promote offline engagement to reduce anxiety and compulsive online behavior.

3. For Policymakers

Educational policymakers should integrate digital literacy, mental health awareness, and FoMO prevention strategies into the high school curriculum, particularly for accelerated programs with high academic demands.

4. For Future Research

Future studies should focus on accelerated-track students using diverse methodologies (qualitative, longitudinal, or mixed methods) to examine the mechanisms, protective factors, and impacts of FoMO on psychological well-being, academic performance, and social functioning.

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