JOSHE Journal of Social Humanities and Education

JOSHE: Journal of Social Humanities and Education
e-ISSN: 3124-3134
Vol. 2, No. 1, June 2026, 234-241
DOI: https://doi.org/10.64624/joshe.v2i1.233

The Effect of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on Impulsive Buying Behavior among Social Media-Using University Students

Alifa Nabilla[1], Melda Aprilia[2]
[1,2] *Bakrie University, Jakarta*
*Corresponding Author email: Nabilaalifa24@gmail.com

Abstract

The rapid growth of social media has transformed consumer behavior among university students, yet empirical evidence regarding the effect of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on impulsive buying within this population remains limited. This study aims to examine the effect of FoMO on impulsive buying behavior among university students who actively use social media. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted involving 79 undergraduate students selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed with Jamovi through descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and simple linear regression. The findings indicate that the measurement instruments demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.722 for FoMO and 0.665 for Impulsive Buying). Regression analysis revealed that FoMO had a positive and statistically significant effect on impulsive buying behavior ($\beta = 0.653$, $t = 6.70$, $p < .001$), explaining 36.8% of the variance in impulsive buying ($R^2 = 0.368$). These findings confirm that higher levels of FoMO are associated with stronger impulsive buying tendencies among university students. This study contributes to the consumer behavior literature by providing updated empirical evidence on the psychological role of FoMO in digital consumption and offers practical insights for educators and policymakers to promote healthier and more responsible digital consumption habits.

Keywords : *Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Impulsive Buying, Social Media, Generation Z, Consumer Behavior*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has fundamentally transformed various aspects of human life, including communication patterns, information access, and consumer decision-making. The widespread use of the internet and social media has enabled individuals to connect, exchange information, and engage in diverse online activities regardless of geographical boundaries. Beyond serving as communication platforms, social media applications such as Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook have become influential sources of entertainment, education, lifestyle inspiration, and product recommendations. University students are among the most active social media users because of their high level of digital literacy and frequent online engagement.

Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest populations of internet and social media users worldwide. According to the Digital 2025 Indonesia Report by DataReportal, Indonesia has approximately 212 million internet users, representing 74.6% of the total population, while active social media identities reach approximately 143 million, or 50.2% of the population. This rapid growth indicates that social media has become an integral part of everyday life, particularly among young adults and university students. Besides facilitating communication, social media increasingly shapes users' lifestyles, preferences, and purchasing decisions through digital content and online interactions.

Despite its many benefits, intensive social media use may also generate psychological challenges, one of which is Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Rinonce and Jannah (2025) define FoMO as a pervasive concern that other people may be experiencing rewarding events without one's participation, accompanied by a strong desire to remain continuously connected with others' activities. Individuals experiencing higher levels of FoMO tend to monitor social media more frequently to avoid missing current information, trends, or social interactions. Consequently, social media functions not only as a communication medium but also as a source of psychological pressure that may influence users' emotions and behaviors.

One behavioral outcome frequently associated with FoMO is impulsive buying behavior. Individuals experiencing FoMO may become more susceptible to making spontaneous purchasing decisions because they are motivated by the desire to avoid missing opportunities or socially valued experiences. Pangastuti and Kusumaningtyas (2025) define impulsive buying as an immediate and emotionally driven purchase made without prior planning, while Nursanti and Wijaya (2026) explain that such behavior reflects the dominance of affective responses over rational evaluation during purchasing decisions. Among university students, who spend considerable time on social media, this tendency may become increasingly relevant in the digital consumption environment.

Previous studies have generally reported a positive relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and impulsive buying behavior. Syahran et al. (2026) found that individuals with higher FoMO tend to engage more intensively with social media, whereas Good and Hyman (2020) demonstrated that FoMO encourages consumption behavior because individuals feel pressured to follow prevailing social trends. Recent empirical evidence has further shown that FoMO significantly increases impulsive buying among university students and young consumers, while self-control can weaken this relationship by reducing the psychological pressure associated with FoMO (Basofitrah et al., 2026). Similar findings were reported by Pham et al. (2025), who found that FoMO significantly contributes to impulsive buying in social commerce environments. Although these studies consistently support the existence of such a relationship, they predominantly examine consumers in e-commerce environments, Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) users, or Generation Z consumers in general, with purchasing contexts that emphasize online shopping platforms rather than the broader social media environment.

However, several research gaps remain. First, relatively limited empirical evidence specifically investigates university students who actively use social media as the primary research population, despite this group representing one of the most intensive social media user segments. Second, previous studies have largely focused on commercial digital platforms, whereas contemporary social media has evolved into an integrated ecosystem where communication, entertainment, and purchasing stimuli coexist through features such as short-form videos, live commerce, affiliate marketing, and personalized algorithmic recommendations. Consequently, the psychological influence of FoMO may operate differently in this broader social media context. Third, although previous studies generally agree that FoMO is associated with impulsive buying, limited evidence has examined whether FoMO remains a significant predictor of impulsive buying among university students within the current social media environment characterized by rapidly evolving digital interactions.

Based on these gaps, the novelty of this study lies in its examination of the effect of Fear of Missing Out on impulsive buying behavior specifically among university students who actively use social media within the contemporary digital ecosystem. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on specific consumer groups or e-commerce users, this study emphasizes university students as intensive social media users whose purchasing behavior is shaped by continuous digital interaction rather than solely by online shopping platforms. Accordingly, this study provides updated empirical evidence regarding the psychological role of FoMO in explaining impulsive buying behavior in the context of contemporary social media use.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on impulsive buying behavior among university students who use social media. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on digital consumer behavior by providing empirical evidence regarding the psychological mechanisms underlying impulsive buying among university students. Furthermore, the results may offer practical insights for educators, researchers, and practitioners in designing strategies to promote healthier and more responsible digital consumption.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the effect of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) as the independent variable on Impulsive Buying as the dependent variable among university students. The target population comprised undergraduate students who actively use social media, while the sample consisted of 79 respondents selected using convenience sampling, as participants were recruited based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in the online survey. The sample size was considered adequate for simple linear regression analysis, which generally requires a minimum of 50 participants plus the number of predictors to obtain stable parameter estimates. The research instrument consisted of two constructs measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*), including five items measuring Fear of Missing Out (FoMO1–FoMO5) and five items measuring Impulsive Buying (IB1–IB5), adapted from established literature on FoMO and consumer behavior. Prior to the main analysis, the questionnaire was evaluated for content and construct validity, and only items meeting the predetermined validity criteria were retained. Instrument reliability was subsequently assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure acceptable internal consistency. Data were collected through an online Google Forms questionnaire after participants had provided informed consent, with participation being voluntary, anonymous, and used solely for academic purposes. The survey was conducted during the study period among eligible respondents. Data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and variable distributions, followed by prerequisite assumption testing, including normality and linearity tests, before conducting simple linear regression analysis to test the proposed hypothesis. All statistical analyses were performed using Jamovi software with a significance level of 0.05.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)

	f1	F2	F3	F4	F5
N	80	80	80	80	79
Missing	0	0	0	0	1
Mean	2.90	3.41	3.25	2.71	2.42
Median	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	2
Standard deviation	0.821	0.867	0.771	0.860	0.841
Minimum	1	1	2	1	1
Maximum	5	5	5	5	5

The descriptive statistics indicate that respondents experienced a moderate level of Fear of Missing Out. The highest mean score was found for the item related to frequently checking social media to avoid missing current information (Mean = 3.41), whereas the lowest mean score reflected the relatively low tendency to remain constantly connected online (Mean = 2.42). Overall, the findings indicate that FoMO is present among university students but remains at a moderate level.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Impulsive Buying

	IB-1	IB-2	IB-3	IB-4	IB-5
N	80	80	80	80	80
Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	2.39	3.33	3.27	2.48	2.86
Median	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Standard deviation	0.849	0.759	0.914	1.06	1.08
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1

	IB-1	IB-2	IB-3	IB-4	IB-5
Maximum	5	5	5	5	5

The descriptive findings also reveal moderate levels of impulsive buying behavior. Respondents occasionally made spontaneous purchasing decisions, although they still considered rational aspects before completing purchases. These findings indicate that impulsive buying tendencies exist but are not dominant among the respondents.

Table 3. Composite Scores of Research Variables

	FoMO_Total	IB_Total
N	79	80
Missing	1	0
Mean	2.94	2.87
Median	3.00	3.00
Standard deviation	0.574	0.614
Minimum	1.60	1.60
Maximum	5.00	5.00

The composite scores confirm that both Fear of Missing Out (Mean = 2.94) and Impulsive Buying (Mean = 2.87) fall within the moderate category. The relatively low standard deviations indicate a consistent response pattern across participants. These results provide an appropriate basis for further statistical analysis.

The reliability analysis demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency for both research instruments. The Fear of Missing Out scale obtained a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.722, while the Impulsive Buying scale achieved a coefficient of 0.665. Although the latter is slightly below the conventional threshold of 0.70, it remains acceptable for exploratory research in the behavioral sciences. Therefore, both instruments were considered reliable for subsequent statistical analysis.

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Model Statistics	**Value**
R	0.607
R^2	0.368
Adjusted R^2	0.360
F	44.90
p-value	< .001
Sample Size (N)	79

Table 5. Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	95% CI
Constant	0.943	0.292	—	3.23	.002	[0.362, 1.524]
Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)	0.653	0.097	0.607	6.70	< .001	[0.459, 0.847]

The simple linear regression analysis revealed that Fear of Missing Out had a positive and statistically significant effect on Impulsive Buying among university students (β = 0.653, t = 6.70, p < .001). Therefore, the research hypothesis was accepted. The regression model also demonstrated a significant overall fit (F = 44.90, p < .001), indicating that Fear of Missing Out is a significant predictor of impulsive buying behavior.

The coefficient of determination (R^2 = 0.368) indicates that Fear of Missing Out explains 36.8% of the variance in Impulsive Buying, while the remaining 63.2% is associated with other factors beyond the scope of this study. These findings suggest that although FoMO is an important predictor, impulsive buying behavior is also influenced by additional psychological and behavioral factors.

The positive regression coefficient indicates that students with higher levels of Fear of Missing Out tend to exhibit stronger impulsive buying behavior. This finding supports the theoretical perspective proposed by Przybylski et al. (2013), which conceptualizes FoMO as a psychological concern about missing rewarding experiences. Individuals experiencing higher FoMO are more likely to respond impulsively when making purchasing decisions.

The present findings are also consistent with previous empirical studies reporting a positive relationship between Fear of Missing Out and impulsive buying among young adults. This study further confirms that FoMO remains an important psychological predictor of impulsive buying among university students who actively use social media.

The findings strengthen previous theoretical perspectives that Fear of Missing Out functions as an important psychological antecedent of impulsive buying behavior. The present study extends this understanding by providing empirical evidence from university students who actively use social media, thereby supporting the applicability of FoMO theory within the context of digital consumer behavior. The findings suggest that universities and educators should promote digital literacy and self-regulation strategies to help students manage psychological pressures associated with Fear of Missing Out. Increasing students' awareness of FoMO may contribute to more rational purchasing decisions and healthier digital consumption habits.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample consisted only of university students, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Second, the regression model explained only 36.8% of the variance in Impulsive Buying, suggesting that other relevant factors were not included in the analysis. Finally, the cross-sectional survey design limits causal interpretation over time. Future studies are encouraged to include more diverse populations and incorporate additional variables such as self-regulation, financial literacy, materialism, personality traits, or social media usage intensity. Future research may also employ mediation or moderation models, longitudinal designs, or mixedmethod approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of impulsive buying behavior.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has a positive and significant effect on impulsive buying behavior among university students who actively use social media, indicating that students with stronger FoMO tendencies are more likely to make spontaneous purchasing decisions in digital environments. These findings provide empirical evidence that reinforces the role of FoMO as an important psychological antecedent of impulsive buying while addressing the research gap by extending previous studies, which primarily focused on e-commerce users or broader consumer groups, to the context of university students as intensive social media users. Accordingly, this study contributes to the growing literature on digital consumer behavior by demonstrating that FoMO remains a relevant predictor of impulsive buying within the contemporary social media ecosystem. Practically, universities and educators are encouraged to strengthen digital literacy and self-regulation programs to help students better manage the psychological pressures associated with social media use and promote more responsible consumption behavior. Future research is recommended to involve more diverse populations and examine additional psychological and behavioral variables, such as self-regulation, financial literacy, materialism, or personality traits, using more advanced analytical models to provide a more comprehensive understanding of impulsive buying behavior in digital contexts.

REFERENCES

Azzahri, N. A. ., & Oknaryana, O. (2026). The Influence of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and Impulsive Buying on Financial Management Behavior among University Students. Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan Ekonomi, 16(1). https://doi.org/10.24036/jipe.v16.i1.55

Basofitrah, A., Zainullah, M., & Baitussalam, M. I. (2026). The Role of Self-Control in Reducing FOMO-Driven Impulsive Buying among Students. MUQADDIMAH: Jurnal Ekonomi, Manajemen, Akuntansi Dan Bisnis, 4(3), 302-318. https://doi.org/10.59246/6qx7md36

Christin, L., Siratan, E. D., Pangaribuan, C. H., Budiyanto, V., Vincent, N., & Krisna, F. (2025, August). Impact of Social Media Compulsive Use on Impulsive Buying with FOMO and Materialism as Mediators. In 2025 4th International Conference on Creative Communication and Innovative Technology (ICCIT) (pp. 1-7). IEEE. https://doi.org/10.1109/ICCIT65724.2025.11167286

Ghaniyah, S. H. (2024). The Impact of Fear of Missing Out on Impulsive Buying. *International Journal of Business Studies*, *8*(3), 220–232. https://doi.org/10.32924/ijbs.v8i3.342

Nursanti, T. D., & Wijaya, M. C. (2026). Click, Scroll, and Buy: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) as a Mediation Between Social Media Interaction and Impulsive Buying Among

Indonesian Female Mobile Game Users. C *Binus Business Review*, *17*(2), 141–153. https://doi.org/10.21512/bbr.v17i2.14343

Pangastuti, N. R. D., & Kusumaningtyas, D. (2025). Pengaruh FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), Flash Sale, Live Stream Shopping terhadap Impulsive Buying pada Konsumen Lip Produk di Tiktok Shop. *Jurnal Ekonomi dan Pendidikan*, *22*(2), 33–44. https://doi.org/10.21831/jep.v22i2.91677

Pham, T. T., Nguyen, L. T. T., & To, N. M. (2025). FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) and social media influencers: Exploring their impact on impulsive buying behavior among young TikTok users in Tra Vinh City. HO CHI MINH CITY OPEN UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF SCIENCE - ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, 15(6), 164–180. https://doi.org/10.46223/HCMCOUJS.econ.en.15.6.3977.2025

Rinonce, E. M., & Jannah, M. (2025). Fear of Missing Out Fuels Impulsive Buying Behavior in Gen Z. *Psikologia*, *10*(1), 97–110. https://doi.org/10.21070/psikologia.v10i1.1847

Saibaba, S. (2024). Online compulsive buying behavior of young consumers in India–Examining the role of smartphone addiction, social media addiction, fear of missing out (FOMO) and impulsive buying behavior. *Journal of Informatics Education and Research*, *4*(1), 155-167. https://doi.org/10.52783/jier.v4i1.532

Syahran, S., Karuniai, E., Marsha, D., Izzaurajz, I. Y., & Armila, R. (2026). Fear of Missing Out and Impulse Buying in the Digital Economy: The Mediating Role of Emotional Arousal in a Cross-border Indonesia–Malaysia Setting. *Jurnal Ilmu Manajemen*, *23*(1), 131–146. https://doi.org/10.21831/jim.v23i1.96894