

Living Online, Fearing Offline: Narcissism and Social Media Addiction as Predictors of Fear of Missing Out among Indonesian Generation Z

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Submitted: 2026-06-02 Revised: 2026-07-19 Published: 2026-08-13 Keywords: Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Generation Z, Narcissism, Social Media Addiction, Social Media Copyright holder: © Author/s (2026) This article is under:  How to cite: Ramadhani, D., & Huwae, A. (2026). Living Online, Fearing Offline: Narcissism and Social Media Addiction as Predictors of Fear of Missing Out among Indonesian Generation Z. <i>Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy</i>, 8(2). https://doi.org/10.51214/002026082007000 Published by: Kuras Institute E-ISSN: 2656-1050	ABSTRACT: Generation Z is highly engaged with social media, making them vulnerable to experiencing fear of missing out (FoMO). This condition may be influenced by personality factors such as narcissism, as well as excessive social media use, commonly referred to as social media addiction. This study aimed to examine the role of narcissism and social media addiction as predictors of FoMO among Generation Z. This study employed a quantitative approach with a multiple linear regression design. The sample consisted of 403 Generation Z individuals in Indonesia, aged 17–25 years, who were selected through an accidental sampling technique. The instruments used included the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ) ($\alpha = 0.896$), the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) ($\alpha = 0.913$), and the Online Fear of Missing Out Scale (ON-FoMO) ($\alpha = 0.904$). Data were analyzed using Jamovi version 2.6.44. The results indicated a significant simultaneous effect of narcissism and social media addiction on FoMO ($F = 102.08$; $p < 0.001$). Partially, both narcissism and social media addiction were found to be significant predictors of FoMO. This study highlights that narcissism and social media addiction are risk factors for FoMO among Generation Z. Therefore, it is important to develop psychological interventions focused on managing social media use and strengthening self-regulation to reduce the tendency to experience FoMO.
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INTRODUCTION

Generation Z is currently facing various mental health challenges related to its digital lifestyle. This is reflected in how member of this generation interacts, access information, and construct their identities on digital platforms (Elkatmis, 2024). Excessive use of social media among Generation Z is associated with an increased risk of depression, anxiety, and stress due to social comparison, cyberbullying, and the pressure to remain constantly online (Keles et al., 2020). As a result, Generation Z experiences increasing mental pressure due to its increasingly intensive and continuously connected digital lifestyle.

The Cybersmile Foundation (2025) revealed that 65% of Generation Z respondents feel trapped in the habit of comparing themselves with others on social media, while 87% stated that social media negatively impacts their mental health, including anxiety, sleep disturbances, and body image insecurity. Another survey by Harmony Healthcare IT (2025) found that 78% of Generation Z reported being addicted to smartphones and social media, with an average screen time of more

than 6 hours and 27 minutes per day. These findings highlight the pressure to stay connected and engage in social comparison, which reflects the growing issue of fear of missing out (FoMO) among Generation Z.

FoMO is characterized by a strong urge to stay connected and keep up with social activities to avoid feeling left behind (Sette et al., 2019). FoMO consists of four dimensions: anxiety, need to belong, addiction, and need for popularity (Sette et al., 2020). This phenomenon has become increasingly prevalent among Generation Z due to their high engagement with social media (Goldman, 2025). Its impacts include anxiety, stress, sleep disturbances, and low self-esteem (Gosain & Yadav, 2020). Conversely, lower levels of FoMO are associated with healthier social relationships, as individuals are less dependent on validation from social media (Weaver & Swank, 2021).

FoMO is influenced by various factors, including social pressure, competitive culture, low self-confidence, and widespread access to technology (Nurhasanah, 2024; Zulfa & Kartasasmita, 2024; Fazria et al., 2024). One relevant factor is narcissism, which involves self-promotion, seeking likes, attention, and validation from others. This tendency can lead to excessive engagement with social media and eventually result in social media addiction (Jabeen et al., 2020). High levels of narcissism can negatively impact social relationships due to feelings of superiority and the constant need for recognition, which in turn create emotional pressure for both the individual and those around them (Day et al., 2020). Individuals with high levels of narcissism tend to compare themselves with others' achievements, which drives them to remain active on social media to avoid feeling left behind (Serrano, 2020). Previous research has shown a positive relationship between narcissism and FoMO (Kong et al., 2021). Individuals with high levels of narcissism are more vulnerable to experiencing FoMO, particularly when they are not involved in social interactions (Mert & Tengilimoğlu, 2023).

In addition to narcissism, social media addiction is another factor that influences FoMO. Social media addiction refers to a condition in which individuals are overly preoccupied with social media activities, have a strong urge to constantly access social media, and spend excessive time and energy using it, thereby neglecting other important aspects of life (Andreassen et al., 2017). Social media addiction is composed of six dimensions: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse (Andreassen, 2015). High levels of social media addiction have negative impacts on psychological well-being, such as body image disturbances and unhealthy eating patterns (Casale & Banchi, 2020). Conversely, low levels of social media addiction do not show significant negative effects on mental health, and moderate use of social media can still support social and emotional functioning (Jaoude et al., 2021).

Narcissism and social media addiction are two interconnected constructs (Brailovskaia et al., 2020). Individuals with high levels of narcissism tend to have low empathy, difficulty accepting criticism, and a tendency to engage in social comparison, which can exacerbate anxiety and feelings of envy (Runcan et al., 2023). Meanwhile, individuals with high social media addiction may experience social problems, a lack of positive feelings toward their own lives, and even interpersonal conflicts (Cheng et al., 2021).

FoMO arises when individuals with narcissistic tendencies have a strong desire for validation and recognition from others through social media. This condition encourages excessive engagement in online activities, which, over time, can develop into addiction. In this context, the need for recognition (narcissism) and excessive attachment to social media reinforce each other, ultimately triggering FoMO (Alshakhsi et al., 2023). Conversely, when FoMO levels are low, individuals are better able to control their need for validation and manage their emotions, making them less likely to feel left behind in others' social lives (Einstein et al., 2023).

Study Aim and Hypothesis

This study aimed to examine the role of narcissism and social media addiction as predictors of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among Generation Z. The study hypothesized that narcissism and social media addiction would be significant predictors of FoMO.

METHODS

Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using a multiple linear regression design. This method was chosen to analyze how two independent variables, narcissism and social media addiction, predict one dependent variable, FoMO, with Generation Z as the primary target population.

Participants

The study population consisted of Generation Z individuals who actively use social media. The sample was determined using incidental sampling, with the criterion that participants were Generation Z individuals who actively use social media. A total of 403 participants met the inclusion criteria and were included in the study. All participants were required to complete an informed consent form before participating in the study. The form provided information regarding the study's objectives, procedures, and data confidentiality. Demographic data of the participants, including gender, age group, and social media usage, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

Participant Classification	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	186	46.2%
	Female	217	53.8%
Age	17 Years	2	0.5%
	18 Years	49	12.2%
	19 Years	57	14.1%
	20 Years	39	9.7%
	21 Years	74	18.4%
	22 Years	59	14.6%
	23 Years	44	10.9%
	24 Years	48	11.9%
	25 Years	31	7.7%
Area of Residence	Sumatra	41	10.2%
	Java	147	36.5%
	Bali	33	8.2%
	Kalimantan	37	9.2%
	Nusa Tenggara	45	11.2%
	Sulawesi	43	10.6%
	Maluku	30	7.4%
	Papua	27	6.7%
Social Media Users	User of Four Applications High Complexity	181	44.9%
	Active Users of 3 Applications	141	35.0%
	Limited Users of 2 Applications	61	15.1%
	Passive Users 1 Applications	20	5.0%

Measures

Scale Narcissism

Narcissism was measured using the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ) developed by Back et al. (2013). This scale was later translated into Indonesian by Muttaqin et al. (2023). The narcissism scale consisted of 18 items, each with five Likert-scale response options, Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Based on the scale testing results, all items were retained, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.896.

Social Media Addiction Scale

The instrument used to measure social media addiction in this study was the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), developed by Andreassen et al. (2017). This scale was translated into Indonesian by Sumaryati et al. (2024), then further adapted by the researchers to fit the research context. The social media addiction scale consisted of 20 favorable items constructed as favorable statements, using five Likert-scale response options, namely Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). Based on the scale testing results, all items were retained, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.913.

Scale Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)

The instrument used to measure FoMO in this study was the Online Fear of Missing Out (ON-FoMO) Scale developed by Sette et al. (2020). This scale was later translated into Indonesian by Kurniawan and Utami (2022). The Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) scale consisted of 20 items using five Likert-scale response options, Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Based on the scale testing results, all items were retained, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.904.

Procedure

Data were collected using three psychological scales: the Narcissism Scale, the Social Media Addiction Scale, and the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) Scale. Prior to data collection, all instruments underwent content and construct validity evaluation through expert judgment by three psychology experts and were pilot-tested on 30 individuals experiencing FoMO. This study received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Approval No. E.6.m/373/KE-FPsi-UMM/VIII/2025) and institutional approval (No. 088/PU-F.Psi/IV/2026).

The research instruments were administered online using Google Forms and distributed via WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, and TikTok between January 6 and February 12, 2026. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were provided with an informed consent form to ensure their voluntary participation.

Data Analysis

Hypothesis testing was carried out using quantitative multiple linear regression analysis. The data were processed using Jamovi version 2.6.44.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Descriptive Statistics Test

Based on the descriptive statistics in Table 2, there were 403 participants whose data were summarized into three variables. The first variable, narcissism, had a minimum score of 33, a maximum score of 84, a mean of 52.5, and a standard deviation of 6.23. The second variable, social media addiction, had a minimum score of 22, a maximum score of 92, a mean of 52.7, and a standard

deviation of 8.55. The third variable, FoMO, had a minimum score of 20, a maximum score of 88, a mean of 52.9, and a standard deviation of 7.90.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Narcissism	403	33	84	52.5	6.23
Social Media Addiction	403	22	92	52.7	8.55
Fear of Missing Out	403	20	88	52.9	7.90

Hypothesis Testing

The effect size test results in Table 3 for Model 1 indicate that the FoMO variable can be explained by a single predictor (narcissism) by 22% ($F(1,401) = 9.15$; $p < 0.05$). Model 2 shows that the FoMO variable can be explained by two predictors (narcissism and social media addiction) by 33% ($F(2,400) = 102.08$; $p < 0.001$). This means that Model 2 is more complex and can explain more variation in FoMO. To determine which model provides better information, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) values are compared, with lower values indicating a better model. The AIC and BIC values for Model 2 are lower than those for Model 1. Therefore, Model 2 is considered to provide better model fit.

Table 3. Effect Size Model Test

Model	R	R ²	AIC	BIC	Overall Model Test			
					F	df1	df2	P
1	0.149	0.0223	2805	2817	9.15	1	401	0.003
2	0.581	0.3379	2650	2666	102.08	2	400	< 0.001

The results of the multiple linear regression test in Table 4 show an F statistic of 191. A p-value < 0.001 indicates that Model 2 is statistically significant. The ΔR^2 value indicates that the addition of one predictor to Model 2 contributes an additional 3.16% to the explained variance of the FoMO variable. Thus, narcissism and social media addiction together are significant predictors of FoMO among Generation Z.

Table 4. F-value Significance in Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Comparison							
Model	Model	ΔR^2	F	df1	df2	P	
1	-	2	0.316	191	1	400	< 0.001

Table 5. t-value in Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Predictor	95% Confidence Interval				t	p	Std. Estimate
	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper			
Intercept	17.317	3.3001	10.8290	23.804	5.25	< 0.001	
Narcissism	0.157	0.0516	0.0551	0.258	3.03	0.003	0.124
Social Media Addiction	0.520	0.0376	0.4456	0.594	13.81	< 0.001	0.562

The results of the multiple linear regression test in Table 5 show that the narcissism variable has a significance value of $p < 0.05$, indicating that narcissism is a significant predictor. Meanwhile, the social media addiction variable has a significance value of $p < 0.001$, indicating that social media addiction is also a significant predictor. The narcissism and social media addiction variables jointly predict the FoMO variable based on the equation $Y = 17.317 + 0.157X_1 + 0.520X_2 + \epsilon$, accounting

for 33% of the variance, while the remaining 67% is explained by other variables not examined in this study. These results indicate that narcissism and social media addiction are significant predictors of FoMO among Generation Z.

Discussion

The research results indicate that the main hypothesis proposed is accepted, namely that narcissism and social media addiction simultaneously serve as significant predictors of FoMO in Generation Z. These findings suggest that the emergence of FoMO in Generation Z can be predicted by narcissism and social media addiction (Moore & Crăciun, 2021). Generation Z has grown up in the digital era with high levels of social media use, which continuously exposes them to the activity, achievements, and social lives of others (Kullolli & Trebicka, 2023). Narcissism strengthens the need for recognition, attention, and social validation, while social media addiction creates a dependency on constantly monitoring social media, both of which together trigger feelings of anxiety about being left behind and further reinforce the experience of FoMO (Maftei & Pătrăușanu, 2023).

The results of the study also indicate that the secondary hypotheses proposed are accepted, namely that narcissism and social media addiction are each significant predictor of FoMO. Individuals with higher levels of narcissism tend to have a strong need for recognition and attention from their social environment, particularly through social media (Usman et al., 2024). Increased exposure to others' activities and achievements can evoke feelings of being left behind and overlooked, thereby increasing FoMO (Hartanto et al., 2022). Meanwhile, social media addiction drives individuals to feel the need to remain constantly connected and monitor the latest developments on social media. When access to social media is disrupted, individuals may experience anxiety and fear of missing information or social interactions (Yıldırım & Yentür, 2024). Thus, the higher the levels of narcissism and social media addiction, the higher the level of FoMO experienced by individuals.

Simultaneously, narcissism and social media addiction interact in a mutually reinforcing manner to increase FoMO. Individuals with narcissistic tendencies have a strong drive to maintain their self-image, gain attention, and remain relevant in their social environment (Liao et al., 2025). On the other hand, social media addiction makes it difficult for individuals to disengage from social media and creates a constant need to keep up with activities and information (Servidio et al., 2021). When these two conditions occur together, individuals are more likely to engage in repeated social comparisons, thereby increasing feelings of being left behind and social anxiety. This condition becomes stronger when the need for self-validation and dependence on social media arise simultaneously, significantly intensifying the experience of FoMO (Adiki, 2025). Therefore, narcissism and social media addiction reinforce each other's impact on the intensity of FoMO.

The findings also show that narcissism has a positive relationship with FoMO. Individuals with narcissistic tendencies tend to be more concerned with how they are perceived by others and have a high need for recognition and social attention (Jabeen et al., 2023). This need to feel acknowledged and valued makes individuals more sensitive to others' social activities. When individuals observe others participating in various activities or receiving more attention, feelings of being left behind and concerns about not being part of the social environment may arise (Fegan & Bland, 2021). This condition contributes to the emergence of FoMO, as individuals become more sensitive to ongoing social dynamics on social media (Akçıl, 2025). This suggests that individuals with high levels of narcissism tend to require continuous social validation through digital interactions.

The rapid development of digital media has made Generation Z a group that is highly connected to social media use in everyday life. This condition makes the relationship between narcissism and FoMO more prominent (Giancola et al., 2024). Generation Z individuals with narcissistic tendencies tend to use social media as a means of self-presentation and obtaining social validation. When their needs for attention and recognition are not fulfilled, feelings of being

undervalued and concerns about missing activities, trends, or social interactions may arise ([Saleem et al., 2023](#)). The interaction between narcissistic drives and a fast-paced, competitive social media environment predicts FoMO experiences among Generation Z, as the need for self-validation and social involvement continuously serves as a predictive factor ([Anjum et al., 2024](#)). Thus, intensive exposure to social media strengthens and repeatedly reinforces the influence of narcissism on FoMO in Generation Z.

These findings support previous research showing that narcissism plays a role in increasing FoMO experiences. Individuals with narcissistic tendencies are more concerned about how they are perceived and tend to seek social recognition, making them more sensitive to others' activities and attention ([Alcântara et al., 2024](#)). This is consistent with earlier findings that the need for self-validation and social relevance can trigger fear of missing out in the context of digital interactions ([Gorbis et al., 2024](#)). Therefore, this study reinforces the view that narcissism is one of the personality factors that significantly contributes to the emergence of FoMO, especially among individuals who actively use social media ([Greenwood et al., 2025](#)).

The results also indicate that social media addiction emerges as a more dominant predictor in explaining variations in FoMO in today's digital era. Individuals with a strong tendency toward social media use feel the need to stay constantly connected and continuously follow others' social activities ([Rafeekh et al., 2025](#)). This dependency increases the likelihood of experiencing FoMO when access to social media is limited or when individuals see peers engage in activities they have missed, leading to fear of missing out ([Zhang et al., 2024](#)). These findings emphasize that social media addiction can strengthen FoMO experiences, as continuous digital interaction creates a drive to obtain information and recognition ([Al-Busaidi, 2022](#)). Thus, social media addiction plays an important role in reinforcing the emergence of FoMO in digital social interaction dynamics.

Generation Z has grown up in a digital era with extensive access to social media, making their interactions with digital platforms highly intensive and part of their daily routines. This condition makes the influence of social media addiction on FoMO increasingly evident ([Lin, 2025](#)). Individuals who frequently use social media feel the need to continuously follow activities on these platforms. Consequently, when they are unable to access social media or miss important information, feelings of worry and fear of being left behind arise ([Mangerongkoda et al., 2024](#)). Continuous usage patterns and the need to stay connected and gain attention from others further strengthen FoMO experiences ([Alabri, 2022](#)). Therefore, high levels of social media addiction in a digital environment can encourage anxiety and the urge to constantly keep up with social developments, especially among Generation Z ([Gopakumar & Dananjayan, 2024](#)).

These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that social media addiction plays a role in increasing FoMO ([Bahar et al., 2023](#)). Individuals who frequently use social media tend to focus more on others' activities, achievements, and social interactions, making them more sensitive to missed information. This dependency leads to feelings of concern about being left behind and a continuous urge to stay connected with the social environment ([Shehab et al., 2025](#)). Thus, this study strengthens the concept that social media addiction can trigger FoMO. It highlights the relationship between how individuals use social media and their responses to observed social activities ([Gültekin, 2023](#)). Overall, these findings emphasize that the intensity and patterns of social media use play an important role in shaping FoMO experiences, particularly through increased attention to others' social activities ([Sultan, 2021](#)).

Implications

An interesting aspect of this study lies in examining the combined role of narcissism and social media addiction in explaining FoMO among Generation Z. Unlike previous studies that typically examined each variable separately, this study shows that FoMO in Generation Z is shaped by the interaction between personality tendencies and addictive patterns of social media use. These

findings provide a clearer understanding of how FoMO develops among Generation Z in a digital environment. Therefore, this study emphasizes that personality factors and patterns of social media use together serve as predictors of FoMO in Generation Z.

Limitations and Further Research

Although this study successfully demonstrates the role of narcissism and social media addiction as predictors of FoMO in Generation Z, several limitations should be noted. First, this study is quantitative in nature, so it cannot establish definitive causal relationships. Second, the data were collected using self-report measures, which may introduce bias in participants' responses. Third, this study focuses only on Generation Z, so the findings may not be generalizable to other generational groups. Additionally, this study does not explore other factors that may influence FoMO, such as psychological conditions, the social environment, or motivations for social media use in greater depth.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study identify narcissism and social media addiction as significant predictors of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in Generation Z. Narcissism contributes to increased FoMO due to the need for validation, admiration, and social rivalry, which cause individuals to feel anxious when they are not recognized on social media. On the other hand, social media addiction acts as a trigger for compulsive behavior that exacerbates the fear of missing out on information, as dependence on social media traps individuals in a continuous cycle of monitoring others' activities. Based on the analysis, narcissism and social media addiction jointly account for a substantial proportion of the variance in FoMO scores, while the remaining variance may be explained by factors outside the scope of this study, such as competitive cultural pressures and low self-control.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

DR and AH approved to the final version of this article.

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