



Does Joy of Missing Out Weaken the Effect of Self-Esteem on Adolescent Psychological Well-Being?

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ABSTRACT

Research Aims: This study examines the moderating role of Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) in the relationship between self-esteem (SE) and psychological well-being (PWB) among adolescents (N=115).

Design/methodology/approach: The present study employed a quantitative correlational design. Data were collected from a sample of 115 adolescents (aged 15–17) in a Jakarta private high school through purposive sampling. The measurement of SE, JOMO, and PWB was conducted using standardized scales (RSES, JOMO Scale, and Ryff's adaptation). The subsequent analysis of the data was conducted using moderation regression via the PROCESS macro in SPSS.

Research Findings: The results of the moderation regression analysis show that SE has a positive and significant effect on PWB ($\beta=0.68$, $p<0.00$), while JOMO has no direct effect ($\beta=-0.05$, $p=0.49$). Key findings reveal a significant negative moderating effect of JOMO ($\beta=-0.35$, $p<0.00$), whereby the SE-PWB relationship weakens in individuals with high JOMO. This model explains 67% of the variance in PWB ($R^2=0.67$), confirming the complexity of the interaction between intrapersonal and social factors in the development of adolescent psychological well-being.

Theoretical Contribution/Originality: This study contributes theoretically to understanding the limitations of SE when interacting with social disengagement tendencies, as well as practical implications for the development of school-based interventions that balance self-enhancement and social skills.

Keywords: Psychological Well-Being, Self-Esteem, Joy of Missing Out

Introduction

Rapid advancements in information technology, particularly digital platforms and social media, have significantly reshaped how adolescents interact by offering conveniences for expression while introducing both opportunities and risks to their social interactions (Livingstone, 2012). Recent data indicates that 49.9% of the Indonesian population actively uses social media (Digital Indonesia, 2024), coinciding with findings that one in three Indonesian adolescents experiences mental health problems, partly driven by intensive social media use (Wahdi et al., 2022). Neurobiologically, adolescence is a critical developmental stage that affects emotional

regulation, making adolescents highly dependent on social acceptance and vulnerable to feedback from their social environment, including digital platforms (Steinberg, 2014).

In navigating these dynamics, self-esteem defined as a basic human feeling of self-worth and self-respect (Rosenberg, 1965) serves as a crucial psychological buffer. Adolescents with low self-esteem are more prone to internalizing symptoms, such as severe anxiety and depression (Ngo et al., 2020). Such social anxiety is frequently triggered by the unwise use of smartphones (Wu et al., 2024) and indicates low subjective well-being among adolescents (Öztekin, 2024). Conversely, positive self-esteem in early adolescence is a strong predictor of sustained Psychological Well-Being (PWB) – an optimal psychological condition encompassing six dimensions of positive functioning (Ryff, 1989) – later in life (Liu et al., 2024). However, while digital advancements provide broad access to information, maladaptive use has been shown to decrease adolescents' PWB (Kumar et al., 2025).

A prominent maladaptive outcome of social media exposure is the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), defined as the anxiety of feeling left out of others' social experiences (Gupta & Sharma, 2021) and reinforced by constant exposure to others' enjoyable activities online (Przybylski et al., 2013). FOMO tends to increase in adolescents with external goals like popularity, negatively impacting academic achievement through attention disruption (Elsayed, 2025) and directly predicting lower levels of PWB (Sutanto et al., 2020). As an adaptive response to this pressure, the concept of the Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) emerged, referring to the ability to feel calm and satisfied even when disconnected from digital social activities. JOMO can stem from social media fatigue (Tandon et al., 2021), occur accidentally during major technical disruptions (Eitan & Gazit, 2023), or be cultivated through mindfulness approaches to mitigate the negative effects of social media (Chan et al., 2022). Although initially proposed with three dimensions (joy of independence, disconnection, and self-reflection), recent research suggests that JOMO is best understood practically as a unidimensional construct representing the satisfaction derived from social detachment (Barry et al., 2023).

While JOMO is generally associated with life satisfaction and positive mental well-being (Barry et al., 2023), its application to adolescent populations presents a paradox. Unlike adults, adolescents rely heavily on peer validation and social connections for identity formation and self-esteem development (Steinberg, 2014). Evidence suggests that the negative aspects of social media, including social isolation, significantly impact adolescent well-being (Osborn et al., 2021), and that complete disconnection is actually more problematic for adolescent self-esteem than heavy social media use (Arora, 2025). This creates a complex dynamic: on one hand, JOMO might protect adolescents from digital pressures, thereby strengthening the predictive power of self-esteem on PWB. On the other hand, JOMO may cause adolescents to miss crucial opportunities to build social relationships, potentially weakening the role of self-esteem in achieving optimal PWB.

To date, no empirical research has tested the role of JOMO as a moderator in the relationship between self-esteem and PWB, particularly among adolescents. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by examining whether JOMO strengthens or weakens the predictive power of self-esteem on PWB in adolescents who are active social media users. Understanding the direction of this moderation will provide theoretical contributions to developmental and media psychology, as well as practical implications for designing adolescent mental health interventions in the digital age—specifically, determining whether approaches should encourage complete digital detoxes or foster strategies to balance digital connectivity with PWB.

Literature Review

In adolescent developmental psychology, self-esteem has long been recognized as a vital predictor of psychological well-being, particularly as stable self-esteem contributes significantly to long-term positive outcomes (Orth & Robins, 2014). However, in the digital age, this dynamic has grown increasingly complex; adolescents constantly navigate continuous social pressures and compare themselves to idealized standards shaped by social media (Vogel et al., 2014). To comprehensively understand how the Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) moderates the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being, this study integrates Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory into a cohesive conceptual framework. From the perspective of SDT, fulfilling three basic psychological needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness is essential for developing healthy self-esteem free from external pressure.

As Deci and Ryan assert, "autonomous motivation is associated with greater psychological well-being." In this context, JOMO represents an active manifestation of psychological autonomy rather than passive withdrawal (Przybylski et al., 2013). When adolescents autonomously choose to disengage from digital social activities, they exercise self-acceptance and freedom of choice. This autonomous fulfillment serves as a foundational step toward self-actualization, aligning with Maslow's (1943) premise that the fulfillment of self-esteem is a prerequisite for realizing one's potential, as "what a man can be, he must be." Furthermore, this active, conscious choice reflects fundamental humanistic values, echoing Rogers' (1961) belief that "the good life is a process, not a state of being," and is supported by evidence that engaging in meaningful, self-directed activities heavily fosters authentic well-being (Howell et al., 2011).

While SDT illuminates the internal, autonomous motivation behind JOMO, COR theory elucidates its critical protective function in a highly demanding digital landscape. According to Hobfoll (1989), individuals "strive to obtain, retain, and protect their resources," meaning that psychological well-being depends on the successful management of internal and external capacities. Constant digital social pressures can severely deplete adolescents' emotional energy and attention, often lowering their mood and overall well-being (Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014). Within this dynamic, JOMO functions as a strategic resource conservation mechanism,

enabling adolescents to avoid unproductive digital involvement and reallocate their cognitive and emotional energy toward more restorative, offline activities.

This conservation approach is closely linked to Balance theory, which emphasizes that well-being relies on an equilibrium between external demands and internal preferences, particularly when individuals pursue personal projects aligned with their core identity (Little, 2007). High self-esteem, if not counterbalanced with effective social regulation, can lead to resource depletion and psychological imbalance. By consciously utilizing JOMO as a healthy disengagement strategy, adolescents can overcome social media fatigue, restore their psychological equilibrium, and ultimately enhance their well-being (Dhir et al., 2018). Ultimately, the integration of SDT and COR theory explicitly demonstrates that JOMO provides both the autonomy to express authentic self-esteem and the protective barrier needed to conserve psychological resources, positioning adolescents to achieve sustainable psychological well-being in a hyper-connected world.

Method

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational design, aiming to determine the effect of self-esteem on psychological well-being with joy of missing out (JOMO) as a moderating variable. Data analysis was performed using moderation regression techniques with the help of the PROCESS macro in SPSS software. The population in this study were adolescents attending senior high school. The respondents in this study were adolescents attending a private high school in Jakarta. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with the inclusion criteria being grade X and XI students aged between 15 and 17 years old who were willing to participate in the study by providing informed consent.

The data collection procedure was carried out in collaboration with the school after obtaining official permission from the principal. The questionnaire was distributed directly to students in class under the supervision of the researcher and accompanying teachers. Before filling out the questionnaire, participants were given an explanation of the research objectives, data confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. All participants filled out the questionnaire voluntarily in approximately 15-20 minutes. A total of 115 students successfully responded. All data collected was used anonymously and only for academic purposes.

Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), which consists of 10 statements. Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale has been widely used and has demonstrated good validity and reliability in adolescent populations (Akhter & Ferdous, 2019). Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) was measured using the Joy of Missing Out Scale, which consists of 13 statements on a 5-point Likert scale. This scale was designed to measure the level of comfort individuals feel when not participating in crowded social activities (Barry et al., 2023). Psychological Well-Being (PWB) was

measured using an adaptation of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale, which consists of 20 items. Each item was answered using a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). This scale covers several dimensions of psychological well-being, such as self-acceptance, life purpose, and positive relationships with others (Villarosa & Ganotice, 2018).

The data were analyzed using moderation regression with the help of the PROCESS Model 1 macro in SPSS software. This analysis was used to test whether the JOMO variable moderated the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being. Before analysis, the data were first examined through classical assumption tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests.

Result and Discussion

The results of the preliminary statistical analysis showed that the research data met the normality assumption based on the Shapiro-Wilk test ($p=0.55$), indicating a normal data distribution and allowing the use of parametric analysis techniques. The reliability values obtained from the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency test for all research variables were within the psychometrically acceptable category, with coefficients of $\alpha=0.77$ for JOMO (Joy of Missing Out), $\alpha=0.81$ for Self-Esteem, and $\alpha=0.85$ for Psychological Well-Being. These findings provide a strong basis for further analysis of the moderating role of JOMO in the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being in adolescents.

Based on the data obtained from the study, the frequency distribution in Table 1 shows that of the total 115 adolescents involved, 49 participants (42.61%) were male, while 66 participants (57.39%) were female. Thus, the number of female participants was more dominant than male participants in this study.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Gender

| Characteristics | Frequency (%) | Percentage |
|-----------------|---------------|------------|
| Male | 49 | 42.61% |
| Female | 66 | 57.39 |

Descriptive statistical analysis in Table 2 reveals the psychological profile of the adolescent sample in this study. Self-Esteem (SE) showed an average score of 3.26 (SD = 0.61), indicating a moderate level of self-esteem. Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) showed a mean of 3.25 (SD = 0.58), while Psychological Well-Being (PWB) recorded a higher score of 4.02 (SD = 0.67).

Pearson's correlation analysis in Table 2 reveals a significant negative correlation between Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) and Self-Esteem ($r = -0.18$, $p = 0.02$). A relationship was also found between JOMO and Psychological Well-Being ($r = -0.13$, $p = 0.07$). The strongest finding was a highly significant positive correlation between Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.00$).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between Variables

| Variable | Mean | SD | SE | JOMO | PWB |
|--------------------------------|------|------|---------|---------|-----|
| Self-Esteem (SE) | 3.26 | 0.61 | — | | |
| JOMO | 3.25 | 0.58 | - | — | |
| Psychological Well-Being (PWB) | 4.02 | 0.67 | 0.62*** | -0.13** | — |

***p<0.01; **p<0.05;
*p<0.10

The moderation regression analysis in Table 3 reveals that Self-Esteem (SE) significantly predicts Psychological Well-Being (PWB) with a strong positive regression coefficient ($B = 0.68, p < 0.001$). In contrast to SE, the Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) variable did not show a significant effect on PWB ($B = -0.05, p = 0.49$). The test results showed a significant interaction effect between SE and JOMO ($B = -0.35, p < 0.001$). This negative interaction indicates that the relationship between SE and PWB weakens in individuals with high JOMO scores. Overall, this model explains 67% of the variance in PWB ($R^2 = 0.67, F(3,111) = 30.57, p < 0.01$).

Table 3. Moderated Regression Results (Self-Esteem X JOMO → PWB)

| Predictor | B | SE | t | p | 95% CI |
|-------------------------|-------|------|-------|------|----------------|
| Constant | 4.00 | 0.04 | 84.05 | 0.00 | [3.90, 4.09] |
| Self-Esteem (SE) | 0.68 | 0.07 | 8.74 | 0.00 | [0.52, 0.84] |
| JOMO | -0.05 | 0.08 | -0.68 | 0.49 | [-0.22, 0.10] |
| Interaction (SE x JOMO) | -0.35 | 0.10 | -3.47 | 0 | [-0.56, -0.15] |

$R^2 = 0.67; \text{Adj } R^2 = 0.45; F(3,111) = 30.57; p < 0.01; p < 0.05; p < 0.10$

The finding that SE has a positive and significant effect on PWB is consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943) and C. R. Rogers' concept of self (Rogers & Rogers, 1959), which emphasizes that self-acceptance and high self-esteem are the foundations of psychological well-being. These results are also consistent with the meta-analysis (Orth et al., 2012), which showed a strong correlation between SE and PWB in adolescents, as well as research by (Ryff, 2014), which found that SE predicted 34% of the variance in PWB through the mechanism of emotion regulation. In the context of adolescent development, these findings reinforce the role of SE as a psychological resource that helps individuals cope with social and academic pressures (Mruk, 2013). However, the strength of this relationship may vary depending on the cultural context. Study by (Nawa & Yamagishi, 2024) showed that the influence of SE on PWB is stronger in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures.

The insignificant direct influence of JOMO on PWB contradicts the initial hypothesis and the findings of (Przybylski et al., 2013), who reported a positive correlation between JOMO and life satisfaction. This inconsistency may be due to differences in the operationalization of JOMO; the scale used in this study measures the aspect of disengagement (Barry et al., 2023), while other studies emphasize the aspect of mindfulness in JOMO (Canonigo et al., 2025). Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) explains that the effect of JOMO may depend on intrinsic motivation. These findings may also reflect the characteristics of the adolescent sample, which is still in a phase of intensive social development (Erikson, 1968). A longitudinal study by A. Lenhart et al. (Nguyen, Kim, & Lee, 2021) on adolescents found that JOMO only had a positive effect after the age of 20, when the need for affiliation began to balance with the need for autonomy.

The significant negative moderating effect indicates that JOMO weakens the positive relationship between SE and PWB, contrary to the hypothesis that JOMO would strengthen the benefits of SE. This finding can be explained through the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989): adolescents with high SE who also have high JOMO may allocate fewer cognitive resources to developing social relationships, which are particularly important for PWB in this developmental phase (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). A similar study by (Barry et al., 2023) found a similar interaction pattern, where JOMO reduced the benefits of social support on PWB by 22%. However, an alternative interpretation could refer to the balance theory (Little et al., 2007) that the negative interaction may reflect an imbalance between the needs for self-esteem and connectedness. These findings reinforce the proposition that adolescent PWB requires optimal integration between self-enhancement (SE) and social engagement, rather than strengthening one aspect at the expense of the other (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Conclusion

The findings of this study confirm the crucial role of self-esteem (SE) as a primary predictor of psychological well-being (PWB) in adolescents, demonstrating a significant positive influence. These results reinforce humanistic psychology theory, which posits self-acceptance as the foundation of optimal psychological functioning (Rogers & Rogers, 1959). However, the Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) did not exhibit a direct influence on PWB, suggesting that social disengagement in itself is not a primary determinant of well-being during the adolescent developmental phase. Most notably, the negative interaction between SE and JOMO reveals the intricate nature of adolescent psychological dynamics: the benefits of SE on PWB are significantly weakened when individuals exhibit a high tendency toward JOMO. These findings challenge the simplistic assumption that JOMO is universally beneficial, emphasizing that adolescents still fundamentally require social connectedness to translate self-esteem into actualized well-being.

In light of these findings, specific educational policy implications emerge. Rather than implementing blanket "digital detox" mandates that encourage complete

digital withdrawal, educational institutions should formulate policies that promote balanced digital citizenship. School curricula and mental health policies must facilitate structured peer engagements both offline and online and equip school counselors with the framework to guide students in harmonizing healthy digital connectivity with mindful disengagement. This ensures that highly self-esteemed adolescents do not isolate themselves to the detriment of their psychological well-being.

For future research, it is recommended to explore the underlying mechanisms of this moderating effect by examining potential mediators, such as social relationship quality and emotional regulation. Additionally, longitudinal studies are warranted to ascertain whether this moderation pattern remains stable or evolves during the transition to early adulthood. Methodologically, developing JOMO measurement instruments that are more sensitive to the unique developmental context of adolescence will further enhance construct validity in future investigations.

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