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The Influence of Social Media Use Intensity and Fear of Missing Out on Adolescents' Career Decision-Making

Nikmarijal

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Syaikh Abdurrahman Siddik Bangka Belitung, Belitung, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of social media use intensity and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on adolescents' career decision-making in Bangka Belitung. Employing a mixed-methods approach with a sequential explanatory design, the study involved 415 senior high school students selected through stratified random sampling across four regencies/municipalities in the Bangka Belitung Islands Province. Quantitative data were collected using three standardized instruments: the Social Media Use Intensity Scale ($\alpha = .891$), the FOMO Scale adapted from the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOs) ($\alpha = .876$), and the Career Decision-Making Scale based on the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy framework ($\alpha = .903$). Multiple regression analysis revealed that social media use intensity ($\beta = .341, p < .001$) and FOMO ($\beta = .476, p < .001$) jointly exerted a significant influence on adolescents' career decision-making, with a coefficient of determination of $R^2 = .507$, indicating that the two predictors accounted for 50.7% of the variance in career decision-making. Qualitative data obtained through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) further enriched the findings by identifying the psychological mechanisms underlying these relationships. The novelty of this study lies in integrating the perspectives of Social Comparison Theory and Self-Determination Theory within the distinctive digital ecology of Bangka Belitung, an archipelagic region experiencing rapid expansion in technological access. The practical implications of the study include recommendations for developing digital bibliocounseling modules for school counselors in senior high schools.

Kata Kunci:

Media sosial;
Fear of missing out;
Pengambilan keputusan karier;
Remaja;
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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menginvestigasi pengaruh intensitas penggunaan media sosial dan Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) terhadap pengambilan keputusan karier remaja di Bangka Belitung. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan mixed methods dengan desain sequential explanatory dan melibatkan 415 siswa sekolah menengah atas yang dipilih melalui stratified random sampling dari empat kabupaten/kota di Provinsi Kepulauan Bangka Belitung. Data kuantitatif dikumpulkan menggunakan tiga instrumen terstandar, yaitu Skala Intensitas Penggunaan Media Sosial ($\alpha = 0,891$), Skala FOMO yang diadaptasi dari Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOs) ($\alpha = 0,876$), dan Skala Pengambilan Keputusan Karier yang dikembangkan berdasarkan kerangka Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy ($\alpha = 0,903$). Hasil analisis regresi berganda menunjukkan bahwa intensitas penggunaan media sosial ($\beta = 0,341; p < 0,001$) dan FOMO ($\beta = 0,476; p < 0,001$) secara bersama-sama berpengaruh signifikan terhadap pengambilan keputusan karier remaja, dengan koefisien determinasi $R^2 = 0,507$, yang menunjukkan bahwa kedua prediktor tersebut menjelaskan 50,7% varians pengambilan keputusan karier. Data kualitatif yang diperoleh melalui Focus Group Discussion (FGD) semakin memperkaya temuan dengan mengidentifikasi mekanisme psikologis yang mendasari hubungan tersebut. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi perspektif Social Comparison Theory dan Self-Determination Theory dalam konteks ekologi digital Bangka Belitung yang khas sebagai wilayah kepulauan dengan perkembangan akses teknologi yang pesat. Implikasi praktis penelitian ini mencakup rekomendasi untuk pengembangan modul bibliokonseling digital bagi guru bimbingan dan konseling di sekolah menengah atas.

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*) Corresponding author, ✉e-mail: nikmarijal@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Internet and social media penetration among Indonesian adolescents has reached an unprecedented scale. Data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2023) indicate that 99.48% of individuals aged 13–18 years are connected to the internet, with an average daily usage duration of 7 hours and 42 minutes. In the Bangka Belitung Islands Province, internet penetration increased from 61.3% in 2020 to 78.9% in 2023 (BPS, 2023), driven by the expansion of telecommunications infrastructure and post-pandemic educational digitalization programs. This condition places adolescents in Bangka Belitung in a distinctive position: they are growing up within a socioeconomic context dominated by the tin mining and tourism sectors while simultaneously being fully integrated into the global digital ecosystem.

In the context of career development, social media has shifted from merely serving as a communication platform to functioning as a complex career information ecosystem. Content creators showcasing particular professional lifestyles, reels promoting “passive income,” motivational videos about dream careers, and alumni testimonials concerning university majors collectively shape what Corvite and Hui (2024) refer to as a “digital career ecology”—a career information environment that is rich in content yet largely unfiltered. This phenomenon interacts with Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), defined as a pervasive apprehension that others may be having more rewarding experiences from which one is absent (Przybylski et al., 2013), thereby creating significant psychological pressure in adolescents’ career decision-making processes.

Adolescent career decision-making has been a central concern in guidance and counseling for several decades. Classical theories, such as Holland’s Theory of Career Choice (Holland, 1997) and Super’s Life-Span, Life-Space Theory (Super, 1980), emphasize the congruence between individual characteristics—such as interests, abilities, and values—and occupational environments. However, these theories were developed prior to the social media era and therefore did not anticipate the influence of digital ecosystems on the formation of career identity.

Two contemporary theories particularly relevant to this study are Social Comparison Theory (SCT) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SCT, originally developed by Festinger (1954) and later extended by Vogel et al. (2014) to the context of social media, explains how individuals evaluate their abilities and opinions through comparison with others. In the social media era, upward social comparison has become increasingly dominant because digital platforms algorithmically prioritize content depicting success and achievement. SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) provides a complementary perspective: healthy career decision-making requires internally driven motivation grounded in autonomy, competence, and relatedness. FOMO, however, is

predominantly extrinsically driven and may disrupt this motivational process by encouraging reactive and conformist decision-making.

FOMO as a psychological construct was first formally conceptualized by Przybylski et al. (2013) within the context of social media. They defined FOMO as a “pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent.” In the career context, FOMO operates through social comparison mechanisms that may encourage adolescents to choose careers based on trends or peer achievements rather than through authentic self-exploration (Baker et al., 2016; Elhai et al., 2017).

A number of studies have examined the relationship between social media and career development. Arnett and Jensen (2019) found that adolescents in the United States who intensively used LinkedIn and Instagram demonstrated higher levels of career exploration, although this was not always accompanied by greater depth of self-understanding. In Indonesia, Cahyani and Herdi (2023) reported a positive correlation between the frequency of social media use and career confusion among first-year university students. However, their study was limited to the higher education context and did not examine FOMO as a mediating variable.

Research examining FOMO in relation to career decision-making remains highly limited. Rahma (2026) found that FOMO was associated with social conformity in the selection of university majors; however, the study employed a qualitative approach and involved a relatively homogeneous sample consisting of psychology students. At the international level, Baker et al. (2016) found that FOMO mediated the relationship between problematic social media use and poor career decision-making. Nevertheless, their study was conducted among Western university students whose social structures differ from those of Indonesian adolescents.

Three significant research gaps can be identified in the existing literature. First, no previous study has simultaneously examined social media use intensity and FOMO as predictors of career decision-making among Indonesian senior high school students, particularly in an archipelagic region such as Bangka Belitung. Second, the majority of previous studies have relied exclusively on quantitative approaches, thereby providing limited insight into the psychological mechanisms underlying these relationships. Third, the Bangka Belitung context presents a distinctive sociological setting: adolescents in this region face a dilemma between conventional careers in the mining and tourism sectors and digital careers promoted through social media, creating specific forms of career identity pressure that have not previously been investigated.

Based on these research gaps, this study positions itself as the first comprehensive attempt to integrate the measurement of social media use intensity, FOMO, and the quality of career

decision-making among senior high school students in Bangka Belitung using a mixed-methods approach grounded in SCT and SDT.

This study aims to: (1) describe the levels of social media use intensity and FOMO among senior high school students in Bangka Belitung; (2) analyze the influence of social media use intensity on adolescents' career decision-making; (3) analyze the influence of FOMO on adolescents' career decision-making; (4) analyze the simultaneous influence of social media use intensity and FOMO on career decision-making; and (5) identify the psychological mechanisms underlying these relationships through qualitative data.

Referring to the JARS–Mixed guidelines (APA, 2024), these five objectives encompass three types of research purposes: quantitative objectives (Objectives 1–4, namely describing variable levels and examining partial and simultaneous effects), a qualitative objective (Objective 5, namely exploring psychological mechanisms through FGDs), and an overarching mixed-methods objective, namely generating an integrated understanding of how qualitative findings explain and deepen the quantitative results through a connecting strategy within a sequential explanatory design.

METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods design using a sequential explanatory strategy, in which quantitative data collection and analysis were conducted first and subsequently elaborated through qualitative data. This approach was selected because it enables statistical verification in the first phase and an in-depth exploration of the underlying psychological mechanisms in the second phase (Creswell et al., 2004; Heppner et al., 2015). The study adopted a causal-associative approach with a cross-sectional design.

The use of mixed methods was based on the consideration that quantitative data alone would be insufficient to explain the psychological mechanisms underlying the statistical findings, whereas qualitative data alone would not allow broader population-level generalization (Creswell et al., 2004). A sequential explanatory design is defined as a two-phase design in which the quantitative findings from the first phase are used to determine the focus and participant criteria for the second qualitative phase, thereby enabling qualitative data to explain the quantitative results in greater depth. The quantitative phase employed a correlational-predictive survey approach, while the qualitative phase used Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) analyzed through thematic analysis.

The study population consisted of all students enrolled in public and private senior high schools in the Bangka Belitung Islands Province during the 2025/2026 academic year, totaling

42,317 students from 87 schools (Bangka Belitung Islands Provincial Education Office, 2023). The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in a minimum sample of 396 participants. To account for an anticipated attrition rate of 5%, the final target sample was set at 415 respondents.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed, with stratification based on regency/municipality and school type (public/private). The four selected administrative areas were Pangkalpinang City ($n = 124$), Bangka Regency ($n = 98$), Central Bangka Regency ($n = 105$), and Belitung Regency ($n = 88$). The sample proportion for each stratum was determined proportionally according to the population distribution.

This study employed three primary instruments that had undergone validity and reliability testing. First, the Social Media Use Intensity Scale (SIMS) was developed and validated by the researchers based on dimensions adapted from Andreassen et al. (2017), encompassing four dimensions: access frequency, duration of use, platform diversity, and types of content consumed. The scale consisted of 20 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Reliability testing yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .891, while construct validity was confirmed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), with RMSEA = .048 and CFI = .967.

Second, the Fear of Missing Out Scale (SFOMO) was adapted from the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOs) developed by Przybylski et al. (2013). Cultural adaptation was conducted through focus-group consultation with school counselors and a language consultant. The scale consisted of 15 items and demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = .876$).

Third, the Career Decision-Making Scale (SPKK) was developed based on the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSE) by Betz and Luzzo (1996) and adapted to the context of Indonesian senior high school students. The scale covered five domains: self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning, and problem solving. It consisted of 18 items and demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .903$).

Quantitative data were collected through an online survey administered via Google Forms and distributed through school counselors at the selected schools during February–March 2026. Survey completion was supervised by school counselors to ensure that participants understood the instructions and to minimize missing data.

Qualitative data were collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving 32 students who were purposively selected based on variations in their scores across the three main study variables. Eight FGD sessions were conducted across the four research locations, with four students participating in each session. Each session lasted approximately 60–90 minutes.

The researcher has an academic background in guidance and counseling and professional experience related to career services in senior high schools in the Bangka Belitung Islands Province. This contextual familiarity provided an in-depth understanding of the local adolescents' social and cultural dynamics; however, it also had the potential to introduce interpretive bias.

To mitigate this risk, qualitative coding was conducted independently by two coders—the principal researcher and one research assistant. Intercoder agreement was calculated, and consensus discussions through peer debriefing were used to resolve differences in thematic interpretation.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 24.0. The analysis included: (1) descriptive analysis to summarize the characteristics of the study variables; (2) classical assumption testing, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests; (3) Pearson correlation analysis to examine relationships among variables; and (4) multiple regression analysis to test the simultaneous and partial influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$. Qualitative data from the FGDs were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) through the processes of coding, categorization, and identification of major themes with the assistance of ATLAS.ti 9.0 software.

Integration of the quantitative and qualitative data was conducted using a connecting strategy, a defining feature of the sequential explanatory design (Creswell et al., 2004). The results of the regression analysis from the quantitative phase were used to determine purposive sampling criteria for the qualitative phase, particularly variation in high and low scores across the three main variables. Themes generated from the FGDs were then used to explain the mechanisms underlying the observed regression coefficients. The integrated findings were presented in the form of a joint display in the Findings section, mapping each qualitative theme onto the relevant quantitative finding together with its integrated interpretation.

The validity and reliability of the quantitative data were established through Confirmatory Factor Analysis, using RMSEA and CFI indices, and through Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all three instruments ($\alpha = .876-.903$), as reported in the Research Instruments section.

The trustworthiness of the qualitative data was strengthened through four strategies: (1) source triangulation, by comparing findings across FGD groups from four regencies/municipalities; (2) member checking, by confirming thematic summaries with selected FGD participants; (3) peer debriefing with fellow researchers in the field of guidance and counseling; and (4) an audit trail consisting of transcripts, coding records, and analytic memos documented in ATLAS.ti 9.0.

The methodological integrity of the mixed-methods approach was assessed based on the consistency between the quantitative and qualitative findings. Both phases demonstrated convergence regarding the dominant role of FOMO as a predictor, while also showing complementarity by revealing nuances that were not fully captured through quantitative data alone, such as the phenomenon of career-specific FOMO identified through the FGDs.

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

Of the 415 respondents included in the study, the majority were female (58.5%), with ages ranging from 15 to 18 years. The distribution across Grades X, XI, and XII was relatively balanced. TikTok was the most frequently used social media platform (52.5%), followed by Instagram (29.9%), YouTube (17.6%), and other platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and X/Twitter (7.0%). The dominance of TikTok is consistent with global data reported by We Are Social (2024), which identifies TikTok as one of the most popular platforms among Generation Z in Southeast Asia.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Respondents (N = 415)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	172	41.05.00
	Female	243	58.05.00
Grade	X	148	35.07.00
	XI	153	36.09.00
	XII	114	27.04.00
Age	15 years	67	16.01
	16 years	138	33.03.00
	17 years	141	34.00.00
	18 years	69	16.06
Primary Social Media Platform	TikTok	189	52.05.00
	Instagram	124	29.09.00
	YouTube	73	17.06
	Others	29	07.00
Total		415	100

Source: Primary Data (2026)

Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the three main study variables. Social media use intensity was categorized as high ($M = 57.43$, $SD = 11.28$), indicating that senior high school students in Bangka Belitung were active and intensive social media users. The mean FOMO score ($M = 52.67$, $SD = 12.04$) was categorized as moderate, while career decision-making was also categorized as moderate ($M = 61.12$, $SD = 13.57$), suggesting that most respondents had not yet developed fully mature and firmly established career decisions.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Category
Social Media Use Intensity (X1)	415	20	80	57.43.00	11.28	High
Fear of Missing Out (X2)	415	15	75	52.67	12.04	Moderate
Career Decision-Making (Y)	415	18	90	61.12.00	13.57	Moderate

Source: Primary Data, processed (2026)

The high level of social media use intensity reflects the specific conditions of Bangka Belitung, where widespread smartphone penetration among students—supported by the availability of affordable mobile data packages from telecommunications providers operating across the archipelagic region—has accelerated digital content consumption. This pattern differs from Wardhana's (2024) findings, which identified moderate levels of use among university students, possibly because urban populations in Java have a wider range of offline activities competing for their digital time.

Correlation Analysis Among Variables

Prior to the regression analysis, relationships among variables were examined using Pearson correlation analysis. Table 3 shows that all correlations were statistically significant at the .01 level.

The correlation between social media use intensity and FOMO ($r = .634$, $p < .01$) indicates a strong positive relationship, consistent with the findings of Przybylski et al. (2013), who identified intensive social media use as an important antecedent of FOMO. The correlation between FOMO and career decision-making ($r = .671$, $p < .01$) was stronger than the correlation between social media use intensity and career decision-making ($r = .598$, $p < .01$), indicating that FOMO was a relatively stronger predictor. No multicollinearity problem was identified, as the

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for X1 and X2 were both 1.674, substantially below the threshold of 10 (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 3. Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables

Variable	X ¹	X ²	Y
Social Media Use Intensity (X1)	1.000	.634**	.598**
FOMO (X2)	.634**	1.000	.671**
Career Decision-Making (Y)	.598**	.671**	1.000

Note. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 26.0 Output (2026)

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted after all classical assumption tests had been satisfied. The data were normally distributed (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test: K-S = .041, $p = .074$), no heteroscedasticity was detected (Glejser test: all p -values $> .05$), and no meaningful multicollinearity was present. The regression results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Constant	14.23	03.47	–	04.10	.000
Social Media Use Intensity (X1)	.412	.053	.341	0,345	.000
Fear of Missing Out (X2)	.538	.061	.476	0,390	.000

R = .712; R² = .507; F = 212.45; Sig. F = .000

Source: SPSS 26.0 Output (2026)

The analysis yielded the following regression equation:

$$\hat{Y} = 14.23 + 0.412X_1 + 0.538X_2$$

Simultaneously, the two independent variables had a significant influence on career decision-making ($F = 212.45$, $p < .001$), with a coefficient of determination of $R^2 = .507$. This indicates that 50.7% of the variance in adolescents' career decision-making could be jointly explained by social media use intensity and FOMO. This R^2 value is relatively large within social-psychological research, suggesting that the digital ecosystem has substantial predictive power in relation to adolescents' career orientation.

Partially, social media use intensity had a significant positive influence on career decision-making ($\beta = .341$, $t = 7.77$, $p < .001$), while FOMO also had a significant positive influence ($\beta = .476$, $t = 8.82$, $p < .001$). The larger beta coefficient for FOMO confirms that it was the stronger predictor. The positive direction of both coefficients indicates that greater social media use intensity and higher FOMO were associated with higher scores on the career decision-making scale.

Interpreting the Direction of Influence: Paradox or Complexity?

The apparently paradoxical finding—that both social media use and FOMO were positively associated with career decision-making—requires careful interpretation rather than simplification. Further analysis at the dimensional level revealed that higher SPKK scores among participants with high FOMO were primarily driven by high scores on the occupational information dimension, whereas their scores on self-appraisal and planning were actually lower than those of participants with low FOMO.

Thus, adolescents with high levels of FOMO were indeed active in seeking career-related information, but they tended to collect information in a breadth-oriented rather than depth-oriented manner and showed limited ability to integrate this information with self-understanding. This finding is consistent with the concept of “career information overload” identified by Gati et al. (2012), in which excessive information can impede the crystallization of career decisions. Within the SDT framework, this pattern may be interpreted as a manifestation of compromised autonomy, in which decisions are driven less by internal motivation and more by social comparison pressures.

Social Media Use and Career-Related Patterns: Survey Findings

Item-level analysis of the SIMS and SFOMO instruments revealed several notable behavioral patterns. Table 5 presents the distribution of responses to items directly related to career behavior.

The data in Table 5 reveal a clinically significant irony: 70.1% of respondents tended to follow careers that were viral on social media, while 72.8% reported anxiety when they did not follow career trends. However, only 41.7% felt that their personal potential was aligned with their chosen career, and only 37.3% had a clear career plan. The discrepancy between high conformity to trends and relatively low self-congruence and planning reflects a pattern of reactive-extrinsic rather than proactive-intrinsic career decision-making.

Table 5. Career-Related Social Media Use Patterns Among Senior High School Students in Bangka Belitung

Behavioral Pattern	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Following careers that are viral on social media	28.04.00	41.07.00	22.06	07.03
Feeling anxious when not following career trends	34.02.00	38.06.00	19.08	07.04
Comparing one's career with peers on social media	41.09.00	35.04.00	16.01	06.06
Feeling that one's potential is aligned with the chosen career	12.03	29.04.00	38.01.00	20.02
Having a clear and structured career plan	09.06	27.07.00	40.05.00	22.02

Source: Primary Data, processed (2026)

Qualitative Findings: Psychological Mechanisms of FOMO in Career Decision-Making

Eight FGD sessions generated four major themes that deepened the understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying the quantitative relationships.

Theme 1: Career Benchmarking Through Viral Content. Nearly all FGD participants reported frequently comparing their career plans with viral content on TikTok and Instagram. One Grade XI student from Pangkalpinang stated:

“Every time I see a video of someone successful on TikTok, I immediately feel left behind. Some of my friends already want to study medicine or information technology... if I still want to choose agriculture, it feels like it is not cool enough.”

This phenomenon reflects the mechanism of upward social comparison (Vogel et al., 2014), which is reinforced by algorithmic filters that tend to prioritize successful and aspirational content.

Theme 2: Peer Pressure Through Stories and Reels. Social media facilitates more intensive peer benchmarking than in previous eras. FGD participants consistently reported that posts about preparation courses for admission to prestigious public universities, digital certifications, or internships at reputable companies generated career-specific anxiety. Unlike generic FOMO, this pattern represents career-specific FOMO—a construct identified in this study as distinct from general FOMO but not yet explicitly conceptualized in the literature.

Theme 3: Dissonance Between Digital Aspirations and Local Realities. Adolescents in Bangka Belitung face a distinctive context: social media projects idealized careers in major cities or flexible digital occupations, whereas family expectations and local economic conditions often direct them toward careers in mining, agriculture, or the civil service. This dissonance creates a

career identity crisis that has not been adequately captured in previous studies conducted primarily in Java or other major urban areas.

Theme 4: The Limited Role of School Counselors in the Digital Ecosystem. FGD participants consistently stated that career guidance provided by school counselors was perceived as insufficiently relevant to the digital realities they encountered. One participant from Belitung Regency commented:

“The school counselor usually talks about the same professions over and over again and never discusses digital careers, content creators, or startups.”

This finding indicates a gap in digital competence between school counselors and students, which may hinder the effectiveness of career guidance services.

Joint Display: Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

As a concrete representation of the connecting strategy described in the Methods section, Table 6 presents a joint display mapping each qualitative theme derived from the FGDs onto the relevant quantitative findings and their integrated interpretations.

Table 6. Joint Display of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Qualitative Theme	Quantitative Evidence	Qualitative Evidence	Integrated Meta-Inference
Career benchmarking through viral content	FOMO significantly predicted career decision-making ($\beta = .476, p < .001$) and showed the strongest bivariate association with career decision-making ($r = .671, p < .01$).	Participants frequently described feeling left behind after viewing peers' or content creators' career achievements on TikTok and Instagram. One Grade XI student stated, “Every time I see a video of someone successful on TikTok, I immediately feel left behind.”	The quantitative association between FOMO and career decision-making is explained by upward social comparison . Repeated exposure to idealized career achievements appears to create comparative benchmarks against which adolescents evaluate their own career progress, supporting the explanatory role of SCT.

Peer pressure through stories and reels	Social media use intensity was strongly associated with FOMO ($r = .634, p < .01$). In addition, 72.8% of respondents reported anxiety when they did not follow prevailing career trends.	Participants reported career-related anxiety after viewing peers' posts about admission preparation for prestigious universities, digital certifications, and internships at reputable companies.	Repeated exposure to peers' career achievements may transform general social media engagement into career-specific FOMO . The qualitative evidence clarifies the mechanism underlying the association between social media exposure and FOMO by showing how digitally visible peer achievements intensify perceived career pressure.
Dissonance between digital aspirations and local realities	Only 41.7% of respondents perceived their abilities as aligned with their chosen career, while 37.3% reported having a clear and structured career plan.	Participants described tension between digitally promoted career aspirations and family or local economic expectations, particularly careers associated with mining, agriculture, tourism, and the civil service.	Exposure to attractive digital career alternatives does not necessarily translate into coherent career planning. The discrepancy between digital aspirations and locally available pathways may weaken self-appraisal and career planning , resulting in career identity dissonance and less crystallized career decisions.
Limited role of school counselors in the digital career ecosystem	Career decision-making remained at a moderate level ($M = 61.12, SD = 13.57$), despite the high intensity of social media use.	Participants perceived conventional career guidance as insufficiently responsive to emerging digital careers. One participant noted that school counseling rarely addressed "digital careers, content creators, or startups."	The findings indicate a mismatch between adolescents' rapidly evolving digital career environment and conventional school-based career guidance. This gap may limit the capacity of guidance and counseling services to help students critically evaluate digital career information and manage career-related FOMO.

Source: Integration of multiple regression analysis and thematic analysis of FGD data, processed by the researcher (2026)

The joint display in Table 6 demonstrates convergence between the quantitative and qualitative findings regarding the dominant role of FOMO, while also revealing complementarity.

The qualitative findings uncovered psychological nuances—such as career identity dissonance and the limited role of school counseling—that could not be fully captured through regression coefficients alone.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study both confirm and extend several previous studies. Consistent with Baker et al. (2016), FOMO emerged as a stronger predictor of career decision-making than social media use intensity alone. This finding supports the argument that the impact of social media on career-related outcomes is determined not merely by the duration or frequency of use, but more importantly by individuals' psychological responses to comparative content encountered on these platforms.

In contrast to Septiadi et al. (2025), who reported a negative relationship between social media and career maturity, the present study revealed a more nuanced pattern: an overall positive association accompanied by problematic subdimensional profiles. This discrepancy may reflect differences in sample characteristics, particularly the use of senior high school students rather than university students, as well as differences in instrumentation. The present study employed a multidimensional measurement approach that was more sensitive to variations across specific aspects of career decision-making.

Compared with Annisak et al. (2025), the present study strengthens the evidence that FOMO functions as a driver of career-related conformity while extending existing understanding through the identification of career-specific FOMO as a construct distinct from generic FOMO. This study also contextualizes the phenomenon within the specific social ecology of Bangka Belitung, thereby demonstrating that FOMO may operate differently depending on the sociocultural and economic environment in which adolescents develop their career aspirations.

This study provides at least three novel theoretical and empirical contributions. First, it identifies the construct of career-specific FOMO—anxiety centered specifically on being left behind in relation to peers' career development—which is conceptually distinct from generic FOMO and may have greater clinical relevance in the context of career guidance and counseling. This construct warrants further attention in the development of future assessment instruments and guidance and counseling interventions.

Second, the integration of Social Comparison Theory (SCT) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) within a single analytical framework provides a more comprehensive explanatory model than previous studies that relied on only one theoretical perspective. This integrated framework helps explain why similar exposure to social media may produce different outcomes across

individuals. Adolescents whose basic psychological needs are adequately fulfilled, as conceptualized in SDT, may be more resistant to the pressures of upward social comparison explained by SCT.

Third, the contextualization of the findings within the digital ecology of Bangka Belitung reveals geographical and socioeconomic dimensions of social media influence on career development that have largely been overlooked in Indonesian guidance and counseling research, which has predominantly focused on populations in Java. Adolescents living in archipelagic regions with economies heavily dependent on natural-resource-based sectors face a distinctive form of career identity conflict when confronted with digital career values and aspirations disseminated through social media.

The findings also have important practical implications for guidance and counseling services in senior high schools. First, school counselors need to strengthen their digital career literacy competencies so that they can assist students in critically evaluating and selectively filtering career-related information obtained through social media. Digital bibliocounseling programs that integrate the analysis of social media content into career exploration may represent one relevant form of intervention.

Second, because FOMO emerged as the stronger predictor, interventions that focus on strengthening basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—within the framework of SDT may be more effective than approaches that merely seek to restrict social media use. Career counseling programs incorporating mindfulness and self-compassion, which have been shown to be effective in reducing FOMO (Kircaburun et al., 2019), deserve further examination within the context of Indonesian secondary education.

Third, the specific context of Bangka Belitung requires the development of contextualized career guidance materials that integrate local career opportunities, including ecotourism, sustainable tin industries, and the maritime economy, with emerging digital career opportunities. Such an approach may help adolescents avoid perceiving local identity and digital aspirations as mutually exclusive and instead support the development of more integrated and realistic career identities.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. The cross-sectional design employed in the quantitative phase does not permit strong causal conclusions, even though the term “causal-associative” was used to describe the hypothesized direction of the relationships. Accordingly, the observed relationships should primarily be interpreted as associative and require further verification through longitudinal or experimental designs. In addition, the quantitative data relied on self-report measures and may

therefore be susceptible to social desirability bias. The qualitative findings derived from 32 FGD participants were intended to deepen understanding of the psychological mechanisms operating within the specific context of Bangka Belitung rather than to support statistical generalization to broader populations. Future research should therefore employ longitudinal or experimental designs, incorporate additional sources of behavioral or observational data, and examine career-specific FOMO across more diverse geographical and sociocultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully addressed all of the research objectives. First, senior high school students in Bangka Belitung demonstrated a high level of social media use intensity, with TikTok emerging as the dominant platform, while both FOMO and career decision-making were categorized at moderate levels. Second, social media use intensity had a significant positive influence on career decision-making ($\beta = .341$, $p < .001$). Third, FOMO also had a significant positive influence on career decision-making, with a stronger effect size ($\beta = .476$, $p < .001$). Fourth, when examined simultaneously, social media use intensity and FOMO explained 50.7% of the variance in career decision-making, representing a substantial proportion within psychological and educational research.

The qualitative findings further enriched the quantitative results by identifying four major psychological mechanisms: career benchmarking through viral content, peer pressure through social media, dissonance between digital aspirations and local realities, and the limited role of school counselors within the digital ecosystem. The primary novelty of this study lies in the conceptualization of career-specific FOMO as a distinctive and clinically relevant construct, as well as in the contextualization of Bangka Belitung's digital ecology as a unique case within guidance and counseling research in Indonesia's archipelagic regions.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to better understand the developmental trajectory of career-specific FOMO and its long-term effects on career decision-making. Further studies are also needed to develop and test guidance and counseling interventions specifically designed to address career-related FOMO in the digital era.

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