



The Phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in Hangout Activities at Pasaraya Blok M

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Abstract

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is the fear of feeling "left behind" due to not participating in certain activities. It is a feeling of anxiety and fear that arises within a person due to missing out on something new, such as news, trends, and other things. One cause of FOMO is the use of social media. The development of today's technology makes it easy for us to receive millions of pieces of information. The phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is one of the important factors influencing the social behavior of the younger generation in the digital media era. This study aims to explain how the habit of 'hanging out' is driven by the FOMO phenomenon as a way to maintain membership in social groups. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive interpretative method within the constructivism paradigm. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with young informants who actively hang out at Pasaraya Blok M, supported by social media observation and documentation. The results show that hanging out is no longer understood merely as a recreational activity or a way to fill free time, but has shifted into a social practice laden with symbolic meaning, especially in the context of identity formation and self-existence. Exposure to social media content, particularly through TikTok and Instagram, shapes the social construct of Blok M as a popular and desirable public space. Based on Maslow and Glasser's perspective, FOMO is understood to be a manifestation of an unstable social need. This study concludes that the hangout culture at Pasaraya Blok M functions not only as a space for social interaction but also as a medium for self-representation, reflecting the dynamic psychological needs of the younger generation within the context of urban digital culture.

Keyword: *Fear of Missing Out, Hangout, Blok M, Social Media, Young Generation*

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INTRODUCTION

The growth of social media has significantly transformed the way individuals create and express their identities, particularly among younger generations such as Gen Z and millennials. Today, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X (Twitter)

function not only as channels of communication but also as spaces where individuals display their lives, tastes, and identities to the public. The concept of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), defined as the fear of missing important events or trends within one's social environment, has become a powerful psychological and social motivator in this context. Przybylski et al. (2013) explain that Fear of Missing Out denotes the compulsion to stay engaged with activities deemed significant by others, but not being personally involved in them.

The phenomenon of "hanging-out" at a viral sites on social media is a prevalent behaviour influenced by FOMO among young people. "Hanging out" has evolved into a form of social identity and a means of seeking self-existence, rather than merely a recreational activity or social gathering. Hanging-out is an activity used to occupy spare time within Indonesian cultural practices, typically involving the consumption of coffee or tea and light refreshments (Cahya, 2018, as cited in Marwabani & Hendrastomo, 2020). A notable illustrations of this trend is the Pasaraya Blok M neighborhood, now considered one of the most favored public locations in Jakarta for young people. Various elements have established public areas near Blok M as a focal point for Gen Z and millennials, such as the plethora of aesthetically pleasing cafés, photobooths, a "retro urban"-ambience, and significant opportunities for social media content creation. Hanging-out activities are often documented with photos or videos, seeking online validation through likes, comments, or interactions.

In this study, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) represents a need for social recognition than merely a fear of being left behind. To avoid feelings of social isolation, individual feel compelled to follow their friends' or peers' posts about hanging-out at well-known places such as Blok M. This process illustrates how social media dynamics and symbolic interaction in public spaces shape and influence social behaviour. Therefore, the phenomenon of FOMO-driven hanging-out at Pasaraya Blok M can be interpreted as a form of self-actualization influenced by the need for validation and social affiliation in public spaces.

Previous studies indicate that the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in the hanging-out culture of young people has largely been examined in the context of coffee shops as symbols of modern lifestyle, social status, and self-image construction through social media. Most of these studies interpret hanging out as a consumptive activity associated with self-branding, digital existence, social pressure to follow trends, and media psychology that positions FOMO as a form of social pressure or a consequence of social media use.

However, these studies leave certain gaps, particularly in understanding FOMO as a drive to fulfil more fundamental social needs, such as a sense of belonging, social recognition, and self-existence, and they remain limited to exclusive and consumptive hanging-out spaces. Therefore, this study examines FOMO within the hanging-out culture at Pasaraya Blok M as a more open and heterogeneous urban public space, using Glasser's and Maslow's Social Needs Theories to interpret FOMO as an existential motivation among young people in fulfilling social needs and constructing self-meaning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using an interpretative descriptive design. The selection of this approach aims to obtain an in-depth understanding and interpretations of the phenomenon of hanging-out at Pasaraya Blok M. The primary focus is to reveal how young people perceive this activity as part of the formation of personal and social identity, as well as to analyses the role of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and social media within this context. The in-depth descriptive findings are interpreted using Social Needs Theory (Glasser & Maslow, 1974) as the main analytical lens to explain the meanings and experiences of the research subjects.

The paradigm adopted in this study is constructivism, which views the truth of social reality as the result of social construction and considers such truth to be relative. In this

research, the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is understood as a construct formed by the research participants (individuals who engage in hanging-out), rather than as an objective and singular phenomenon.

This study was conducted at Pasaraya Blok M as the primary research site. The research focus is directed toward the uniqueness of Pasaraya Blok M as a hanging-out space that differs from traditional market and modern shopping centers. The research subjects consist of Gen Z and millennials who actively spend time at Pasaraya Blok M and experience the influence of the FOMO phenomenon from social media in their social activities. Informant selection uses purposive sampling and snowball sampling to identify key informants capable of providing rich and in-depth data regarding self-existence, experiences of FOMO, and the formation of social identity related to these activities.

Data collection in this study is conducted through triangulation techniques to obtain comprehensive and in-depth data. The researcher employs in-depth interviews as the primary method to explore the meanings, experiences, and reasons behind the research subjects' participation in hanging-out activities at Pasaraya Blok M, including the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and social media. In addition, the researcher conducts observations to examine social interactions and the dynamics of FOMO that emerge within the public space. Documentation techniques are also used by collecting data in the form of photographs, field notes, and social media content such as post, stories, and forms of digital interaction related to hanging-out activities at Pasaraya Blok M. Additional supporting data are obtained through a literature review of journal articles, scholarly books, and relevant online sources related to the research topic.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings on the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in young people's hanging-out activities at Pasaraya Blok M. The data were obtained through in-depth interviews with informants and subsequently analyzed using qualitative coding techniques. The research findings are organized thematically to illustrate the experiences, perceptions, and social meanings that emerge from hanging-out activities and social media use. Based on direct interviews and the analysis of two young informants, the researcher found that hanging-out at Pasaraya Blok M is not merely motivated by the desire to fill leisure time, but has become part of young people's social and psychological needs. Both informants stated that this habit is related to a perceived obligation to be present at Pasaraya Blok M because it is currently trendy, offers social recognition, and contributes to self-identity formation, particularly within an increasingly digital environment.

The phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) emerges when individuals feel anxious about missing out on popular social experiences around them. When informants saw their peers hanging-out at Pasaraya Blok M on social media, hanging-out was no longer perceived as casual conversation, but rather as something they felt compelled to participate in in order to remain considered part of the group. The researcher views this activity as also functioning as a means of maintaining social relationships and avoiding feelings of social isolation.

The Meaning of Hanging-out and Social Needs

Conceptually, hanging-out can be understood as a casual social activity carried out by individuals or groups in a particular place, generally in public spaces. This activity is not merely purposeless sitting, but serves as a forum for social interaction that strengthens friendships, shapes social identity, and expresses youth lifestyles. In urban society, hanging-out functions as a form of informal communication and becomes part of popular culture that reflects the need for inclusive and open social spaces. This activity can also be viewed as a social phenomenon representing processes of symbolic interaction and meaning-making among individuals.

William Glasser and Abraham Maslow are influential figures in psychology who both emphasize that human behavior is driven by efforts to fulfill basic needs. In the context of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon in hanging-out activities, Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a relevant analytical framework for understanding individual behavioral motivations. Hanging-out is not solely undertaken for entertainment, but is closely related to the fulfillment of social needs, such as the desire to be accepted, recognized, and remain connected to one's social environment. FOMO arises when individuals experience anxiety about being left behind from social experiences enjoyed by others, particularly when hanging-out is perceived as a means of building relationships, enhancing social status, and affirming self-existence. This indicates that the needs for affiliation and esteem often become dominant factors driving hanging-out behavior, even when other needs have not been fully met. Physical presence at popular hanging-out spots provides a sense of acceptance and belonging within peer groups.

FOMO and Social Needs from Maslow's Perspective

Based on the research findings, the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) influencing social gathering behavior can be understood through Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, particularly at the levels of social needs and esteem needs. These two levels are highly relevant for explaining individual motivations involved in social interactions at Pasaraya Blok M. Regarding social needs, Maslow explains that every individual has a basic drive to build relationships, be accepted by a group, and feel a sense of belonging within a community. The research shows that informants felt more connected to their friends when participating in gatherings at popular locations. Physical presence in these public spaces is viewed not only as recreation, but also as recognition of social membership. Sharing moments on social media further strengthens this social factor by serving as a symbol of involvement in group dynamics. In this context, FOMO can be seen as a psychological response related to concerns about losing social connections if individuals do not participate in ongoing group experiences.

In relation to esteem needs, gathering behavior is also associated with individual efforts to gain recognition and positive evaluation from those around them. Informants linked their participation in gatherings to their presence on social media, such as the number of "likes," comments, or reactions from peers. This digitally obtained validation acts as symbolic esteem, fostering self-confidence and a positive self-image. Therefore, gathering activities function not only as direct social interaction but also as a means of self-representation in the digital sphere to construct a desired social image.

Both informants viewed gathering activities as manifestations of lifestyle and personal identity formation. This reflects a connection to the need for self-actualization, the need to optimize one's potential and present oneself in an idealized way. However, the analysis shows that self-actualization in this context is still heavily influenced by external social norms, particularly trends circulating on social media. Consequently, the self-actualization that emerges is often situational and dependent on social acceptance, and thus does not fully reflect autonomous personal potential fulfillment as described in Maslow's theory.

Overall, the findings indicate that FOMO functions as a psychological mechanism closely related to efforts to fulfill social and esteem needs. Gathering activities serve as a means through which individuals maintain social connections while simultaneously building self-recognition within an increasingly digitally connected social environment.

FOMO and Glasser's Five Basic Needs

William Glasser, in Choice Theory, explains that every individual is driven by five basic needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun (Wubbolding, 2017). In the

context of hanging-out behaviour triggered by FOMO, such behaviour can be understood as individuals' efforts to fulfill these five basic needs.

1. Love and Belonging

The findings show that young people consciously choose to come to Blok M in order to remain connected to their social circles. The phenomenon of FOMO emerges when they feel this need is threatened, such as when they feel unaware of latest trends.

2. Power

Power in this context refers to recognition and status. This is evident in informants' desire to feel acknowledged and considered "up-to-date" or "trendy". Visiting viral locations gives them a sense of capability in keeping up with trends. Social media posts serve as one form of achievement through which they seek recognition from others.

3. Fun

Hanging-out essentially provides enjoyment, entertainment, and a relaxed atmosphere. However, the research shows that this enjoyment can sometimes feel forced and intertwined with social pressure. To fulfill this need, individuals may need to prepare a larger budget and push themselves to attend even when tired, simply to avoid feeling left out. This demonstrates that behaviour is strongly influenced by the drive to meet social needs.

4. Freedom

Based on the findings, young people choose Blok M as a hanging-out location because it is perceived as more open and less bound by formal rules. They feel able to express themselves freely according to their desired lifestyle without fear of judgement. However, this lifestyle freedom is often influenced by TikTok algorithms.

5. Survival

In this context, survival is interpreted as "social position security", meaning the ability to continue existing within a social environment. The research indicates that individuals express fear of being left out. From the researcher's perspective, this feeling is seen as a threat to social existence. By keeping up with trends, individuals feel secure and able to remain within their social circles.

The Dynamics of FOMO and Hanging Out

The phenomenon of FOMO in hanging-out activities at Pasaraya Blok M reflects the strong social needs among young people. Hanging-out activities at Blok M are heavily influenced by social media, particularly TikTok. In the current era, many young people publicize their activities while at Blok M. The abundance of content circulating about Blok M makes young people feel compelled to participate in hanging-out activities in order not to fall behind their social environment. The visualization of unique places on social media becomes a trigger for visit interest. Strategic transportation access, such as MRT and Busway Services, removes barriers for young people to remain involved in popular social activities.

Hanging-out activities at Pasaraya Blok M have shifted from ordinary social interaction into an effort to maintain self-existence. Individuals experience strong psychological pressure in the form of fear of being left out. Following trends becomes an unwritten obligation to remain socially relevant. In this sense, hanging-out at Blok M functions as proof that individuals are still "connected" to ongoing social dynamics. The need for recognition on social media also influences individual behaviour during hanging-out activities. Individuals feel compelled to document and upload their experiences to social media in order to gain validation. This phenomenon transforms hanging-out culture from a focus on interpersonal relationship into the fulfillment of social needs.

Thus, from the perspectives of Maslow and Glasser, FOMO can be understood as a manifestation of social needs that are not yet fully stable. Hanging-out activities at Blok M

serve as a medium for fulfilling these needs, both through direct togetherness and symbolic validation on social media. This phenomenon demonstrates that young people's social behaviour in urban public spaces cannot be separated from the underlying dynamics of their psychological needs.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a significant factor influencing young people's hanging-out activities at Pasaraya Blok M. Hanging-out is no longer understood merely as a recreational activity or a way to fill leisure time, but has shifted into a social practice rich in symbolic meaning, particularly in the context of identity formation and self-existence. Exposure to social media content, especially through TikTok and Instagram, constructs a social perception of Blok M as a popular and desirable public space to visit. This condition creates social pressure for individuals to be present so as not to feel left behind, isolated, or disconnected from their peer groups. Thus, FOMO functions as a psychological drive that directs young people's social behaviour to adapt to trends developing within both digital and social environments.

Viewed through the perspectives of Maslow's and Glasser's needs theories, the phenomenon of FOMO in hanging-out activities at Pasaraya Blok M reflects individuals' efforts to fulfil needs for love and belonging, esteem, and security of social position. Physical presence in a trending public space, along with the practices of documentation and sharing on social media, serves as a form of symbolic validation that strengthens feelings of acceptance and recognition within the social environment. However, the fulfilment of these needs tends to be a situational and dependent on external recognition, meaning that the resulting self-actualization remains influenced by social norms and expectations. Therefore, Pasaraya Blok M functions not only as a space for social interaction, but also as a medium of self-representation that reflects the dynamics of young people's psychological needs within the context of urban digital culture.

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