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Faith Over FOMO: Christian Religious Education in Nurturing the Faith of Generation Z

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on the spiritual well-being of young Christians and examines how Christian theological values offer a unique and sustainable solution. FOMO, fueled by constant social media exposure, often results in anxiety, dissatisfaction, and a reliance on external validation. The research employs a qualitative literature review approach, drawing insights from psychology, sociology, and Christian theology. The findings highlight the importance of embracing Christian principles such as contentment and inner peace in Christ to address the psychological and spiritual effects of FOMO. By prioritizing a relationship with God over social recognition, individuals can experience a stable sense of fulfillment that is not contingent on fluctuating societal standards. The study also underscores the critical role of family and the church in imparting these values through discipleship and practical guidance, thereby helping young Christians build resilience against the pressures of digital culture.

Keywords: FOMO, spirituality, Christian theology, contentment, social media

INTRODUCTION

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has become an increasingly significant phenomenon in the digital age and has a major impact on mental and spiritual well-being, particularly amongst the younger generation. FOMO is defined as anxiety arising from self-dissatisfaction and a desire to engage in experiences perceived as more appealing by others ([Milyavskaya et al., 2018](#)). Constant exposure to social media exacerbates these feelings, ultimately leading individuals to rely on external validation and reducing life satisfaction. In the context of the Christian faith, FOMO presents a unique challenge as it drives individuals to seek happiness outside their relationship with God, traps them in the world's transient standards, and triggers a spiritual crisis. This study aims to explore how Christian values, such as simplicity and contentment in God, can serve as effective solutions to overcome FOMO and foster spiritual maturity.

More than just a feeling of fear, FOMO involves a sense of missing out on valuable opportunities that others are currently enjoying, a feeling that is further exacerbated by constant exposure to social media. In a social context that places great emphasis on achievement and self-image, FOMO compels individuals to remain digitally connected, even though this often serves only to deepen their own feelings of isolation and unhappiness ([Ginting et al., 2021](#)). This phenomenon not only highlights a dependence on social media but also illustrates the search for self-worth through social validation, which in turn can have a negative impact on emotional well-being.

Research shows that younger generations, particularly those born and raised in a digital culture, are the group most vulnerable to the effects of FOMO ([Dogan, 2019](#)). This generation lives in a culture that values speed, openness and constant connectivity, so FOMO drives them to constantly compare themselves with the achievements of others, which are often merely an artificial portrayal on social media. Dogan ([2019](#)) emphasises that social media functions as a stage for showcasing “the best moments,” creating an incomplete reality and encouraging constant social comparison. Exposure to such content

exacerbates intense and persistent social comparison, which ultimately undermines happiness and gives rise to feelings of envy and dissatisfaction.

The psychological dependence arising from FOMO has serious implications for mental health, particularly in exacerbating symptoms of anxiety, depression and feelings of social isolation. These effects significantly reduce an individual's subjective well-being, suggesting that dependence on social media is not only addictive but can also be emotionally damaging (Holte & Ferraro, 2020). A study conducted by Ginting (2021) revealed that excessive use of social media creates social standards that are almost impossible to achieve, which ultimately leads to life dissatisfaction. Social media does indeed offer quick access to glimpses of others' happiness, yet ironically, this often places immense pressure on individuals to achieve similar levels of happiness. Consequently, FOMO creates a cycle of dependency that makes individuals feel they are always 'missing out'.

Research conducted by Susanto (2020) shows that young people face additional pressure to follow social trends and 'stay connected', making FOMO more than just an individual psychological phenomenon. FOMO reflects a social phenomenon influenced by a global digital culture that values connectivity and social recognition. As a cross-cultural phenomenon, FOMO is not only linked to dependence on technology, but also to the dynamics of collective dissatisfaction arising from society's expectations of constant connectivity.

Satisfaction derived from faith in Christ, and directs them towards the pursuit of happiness that is merely temporary. In the context of the Christian faith, this reliance on social recognition can be seen as a deviation from the Christian calling, which should prioritise finding fulfilment in God. As the younger generation continually pursues the world's often unrealistic standards of happiness, they miss the opportunity to deepen their relationship with God.

Hidayat and Susanti (2020) notes that dependence on worldly recognition can weaken spirituality and diminish spiritual fulfilment among young Christians. When young people compare their lives with the 'ideal' lives often portrayed on social media, they frequently face a spiritual identity crisis. Gospel values that teach contentment in a relationship with God are frequently forgotten, making FOMO a serious challenge to the Christian faith, which fundamentally emphasises a God-centred life and deep fulfilment in one's relationship with Him.

The psychological and spiritual effects of FOMO highlight the importance of a holistic approach to addressing this phenomenon. A theological approach that teaches the values of simplicity and contentment in God can be an effective solution for young Christians in dealing with FOMO. The concept of simplicity, as taught in 1 Timothy 6:6–10, reminds Christians that true contentment does not come from achievements or social validation, but from a close relationship with God. This approach is in line with Christ's teaching, which emphasises true happiness through a deep relationship with God, rather than through worldly recognition.

The application of these values of simplicity provides a strong foundation for combating FOMO, by guiding people to seek happiness in God. This perspective serves not

only as a spiritual guide but also fosters emotional and mental resilience, helping young Christians avoid becoming trapped in digital social anxiety. This Gospel-centred approach, which emphasises happiness in Christ, offers young Christians an alternative for navigating the ever-evolving digital challenges, whilst cultivating a more robust and meaningful spiritual life.

This study aims to address two key questions regarding the impact of FOMO on the spiritual well-being of young Christians and how Gospel values can offer solutions to this phenomenon: Firstly, how does FOMO affect the spiritual well-being of young Christians? Secondly, how can the Gospel perspective and Christian values help Christians overcome FOMO? This study is significant as it offers solutions grounded in Christian theology to address the challenges of FOMO in the digital age. By recognising that FOMO is not merely a psychological phenomenon but also has a spiritual dimension, this study highlights how Christian values—which teach inner peace and tranquillity in faith—can serve as a guiding principle for the younger generation of Christians. This theological perspective offers a solution distinct from conventional psychological approaches, as it guides people to find true and eternal happiness in their relationship with God, regardless of the social pressures of the digital world.

METHOD

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) from the perspectives of social psychology and Christian theology. This method was chosen as it allows for an in-depth analysis that integrates relevant psychological and Christian theological perspectives in understanding the impact of FOMO and the solutions offered by spiritual values. Using a literature review, this study combines concepts from previous research to provide a comprehensive understanding, particularly regarding theological interventions in addressing FOMO. This approach is supported by Alexander's (2021) view, which emphasises the importance of literature analysis in contextual theological studies to address increasingly complex spiritual challenges in the digital age.

The primary data sources are drawn from academic books and articles examining the effects of FOMO on mental well-being, particularly amongst the younger generation. This literature explores how FOMO influences happiness and fosters patterns of dependence on social validation, which ultimately disrupts emotional well-being (Milyavskaya et al., 2018). This understanding provides a conceptual basis for viewing FOMO as a psychological challenge requiring interventions beyond conventional anxiety management strategies.

Theological literature focuses on the principles of simplicity and contentment in God, which are regarded as a spiritual solution to FOMO. Setyobekti (2024) highlights that the principle of simplicity helps people prioritise their relationship with God over social recognition, offering inner peace and freedom from social pressure. This literature also highlights the role of the Christian family in building strong character and Gospel values, which form the foundation for the younger generation to face the temptations of digital culture.

Using a literature review approach, this study incorporates Christian theological

perspectives to offer solutions. It presents the Gospel perspective as a holistic solution to FOMO, which not only alleviates anxiety but also guides people towards happiness rooted in faith and a relationship with God.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Impact of FOMO on Spirituality

External factors create a shift in focus from seeking fulfilment in Christ towards the pursuit of worldly recognition. This runs counter to the principle of simplicity taught in the Bible, which emphasises that true happiness comes from a relationship with God, not from external standards. As young Christians continually chase after what they see on social media, they miss the opportunity to strengthen the faith and inner peace that should be rooted in a relationship with God. This aligns with Maghfiroh's (2023) study, which states that people who feel socially connected through digital media are more prone to experiencing social anxiety. This dependence often shifts spiritual focus away from God towards the pursuit of worldly recognition, which disrupts inner peace and reduces time for spiritual disciplines such as prayer and Bible reading.

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From a Christian perspective, FOMO conflicts with the principle of simplicity, which emphasises that true happiness comes from a relationship with God, not from external achievements or recognition (Setiawan & Rendealla, 2024). An excessive need for social validation creates a 'spiritual void', in which people become fixated on what is 'missing' rather than being grateful for what God has already provided. This phenomenon underscores the importance of returning to the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith, which point towards the fulfilment that comes from God.

Worldly Satisfaction or Divine Satisfaction

FOMO often drives people to seek temporary worldly validation. In John 4:13–14, Jesus states that "whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again", reminding us that worldly satisfaction always requires repeated fulfilment. In contrast, Jesus offers "living water" that eternally quenches the soul's thirst. This teaching invites Christians to break free from the endless pursuit of social recognition and to focus on eternal satisfaction in Christ.

Furthermore, 1 Timothy 6:6–10 emphasises the importance of finding contentment in the Lord. This principle of simplicity guides Christians to avoid becoming trapped in a cycle of material pursuit or social achievement. In the Christian life, FOMO can be seen as

an obstacle that hinders peace and contentment in Christ, as reliance on external validation undermines the self-confidence and inner peace that should be found in faith.

A Biblical Solution to FOMO

In response to the challenge of FOMO, the Bible teaches that true fulfilment can only be found in a relationship with Christ. Philippians 4:6–7 encourages believers to cast their anxieties upon the Lord through prayer and thanksgiving, so that they may receive a peace that surpasses all understanding. This passage teaches that faith provides a peace that is not dependent on external achievements, a perspective that stands in contrast to the world's drive to constantly be 'better' in the eyes of others.

In this context, the principle of simplicity, as outlined in 1 Timothy 6:6–10, emphasises contentment in the Lord without the need to constantly seek social validation. This leads people to a happiness rooted in the Lord and steers them away from dependence on worldly achievements. This principle aligns with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:25–34, which reminds us that God knows humanity's needs and calls His people to trust and live in contentment.

The principle of simplicity helps Christians to face FOMO with an attitude of gratitude and humility. In 1 Timothy 6:6–10, Paul emphasises that 'godliness with contentment is great gain', affirming that happiness need not be pursued through endless material achievements. A simple life enables people to experience deep satisfaction in God, rather than from temporary worldly achievements or recognition.

The primary approach to addressing FOMO from a Christian perspective is through family nurturing and discipleship that emphasise Gospel values. Hendrawan states that Christian families play a vital role in shaping children's spiritual foundations by teaching them that God's love is the primary source of happiness, rather than worldly achievements (Ari Yunus Hendrawan, 2024). Discipleship within the family also serves as character-building, instilling the values of simplicity and contentment in Christ.

Setyobekti et al (2024) added that discipleship fosters the ability to find contentment in Christ, which helps the younger generation avoid the pressure to meet unstable social standards. Thus, discipleship provides the younger generation with a strong spiritual foundation to resist worldly pressures that trigger FOMO. The church community plays a vital role in supporting the younger generation to live free from FOMO. The church can provide a safe environment for young people to build their identity in Christ without being influenced by worldly expectations. Here, the church functions as a 'spiritual fortress', where congregants can find peace and a sense of self that does not depend on social recognition.

The church can also run discipleship programmes and discussion groups that address the challenges of social media, helping young people find peace and a sense of identity in Christ. These discussions provide a safe space for young people to support one another in dealing with social pressures and FOMO.

A biblical solution offers a different approach to dealing with FOMO, focusing on inner peace and simplicity that lead to contentment in God. Philippians 4:6–7 affirms that the peace of God is able to guard the hearts and minds of believers, transcending the anxiety

caused by the need for recognition or social connection. The principle of simplicity, as emphasised in 1 Timothy 6:6–10, reminds us that happiness lies in a relationship with God, not in achievements or social validation. The Biblical Solution guides the younger generation to discover true meaning in life through a relationship with God. FOMO often creates the illusion that happiness can only be achieved through external accomplishments, but the Gospel teaches that true happiness arises from a strong relationship with Christ. Thus, this solution provides a solid foundation for the younger generation to live in a happiness that remains unshaken by external influences.

Collaboration between the church, the family and Christian schools is vital in providing comprehensive support in dealing with FOMO. Each of these elements plays a unique role in shaping strong character and guiding the younger generation towards true fulfilment in God. This collaboration enables people to understand that their self-worth stems from their relationship with God, not from social recognition.

Thus, the spiritual foundations instilled within the Christian community help the younger generation to withstand ever-changing social pressures and lead lives centred on eternal purposes.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Gospel values, such as simplicity and contentment in Christ, offer an effective solution for Christians in dealing with FOMO. By prioritising their relationship with God over social validation, young Christians can achieve inner peace that is not dependent on ever-changing social standards. The roles of family and the church are vital in instilling these principles through mentoring and discipleship. It is hoped that these recommendations will help build spiritual resilience among young Christians against the pressures of digital culture, by emphasising the importance of a strong relationship with God as the source of true contentment, where the values of simplicity and inner peace help people to be free from the need for social validation. Simplicity in Christ is not merely a strategy for reducing anxiety, but a shift in life's orientation, guiding Christians to view fulfilment as the result of a stable spiritual relationship, rather than fleeting social status. To integrate Gospel values into the nurturing of the younger generation. The Church can develop discipleship programmes that emphasise simplicity and dependence on Christ as the cornerstone of life. These Gospel-based discipleship programmes will foster a firm faith and spiritual resilience in the face of shifting social norms. Christian families are also encouraged to actively instil the principles of a simple life from an early age, creating an environment that supports children's spiritual growth so that they may face the temptations of FOMO with steadfastness.

This study recommends empirical research to examine the application of Gospel values in addressing FOMO among young Christians. Further studies using both qualitative and quantitative approaches could provide deeper insights into how Gospel-based solutions are applied in everyday life. Qualitative research, for example through in-depth interviews, could explore the unique ways in which Christians cope with digital social pressure. Furthermore, research into the effectiveness of family-based discipleship programmes in fostering character resilient to digital social pressure could make a valuable contribution to church and family development strategies in the digital age.

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BIODATA



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