

The Role of FOMO on Netflix Subscription Intention

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examines the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on Generation Z university students' Netflix subscription intention. The research is motivated by the increasing reliance of students on streaming platforms for entertainment, cultural exposure, and informal learning, alongside heightened psychological pressures associated with digital connectivity. **Method:** A quantitative explanatory approach was employed using online questionnaires distributed to 385 university students aged 18-24 who actively use Netflix. Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, 385 were returned and deemed valid (response rate: 96.25%). Non-probability purposive sampling was applied. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, reliability and validity testing (HTMT criterion for discriminant validity), and hypothesis testing using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with bootstrapping. **Results:** Students exhibited moderate-to-high FOMO levels ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.92$) and predominantly high subscription intentions ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.78$) on a 5-point Likert scale. FOMO had a significant positive effect on subscription intention ($\beta = 0.432$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 43.2% of the variance. Perceived usefulness, social influence, and digital literacy were measured as contextual variables but not incorporated into the structural model. The remaining 56.8% of unexplained variance indicates that other psychological, social, and technological factors warrant future investigation. **Novelty:** This study provides empirical evidence that FOMO is a significant predictor of streaming platform adoption among Generation Z. The findings offer practical implications for platform providers and educational institutions to develop targeted interventions addressing psychological drivers and digital literacy competencies relevant to subscription behavior in higher education contexts.

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has produced fundamental transformations in media consumption behavior, particularly among Generation Z. As digital natives born between 1997 and 2012, Generation Z demonstrates media consumption patterns that differ markedly from those of previous cohorts (Syukur et al., 2025). One prominent development is the increasing reliance on Over The Top platforms such as Netflix for audiovisual content consumption. For higher education students, these platforms no longer function solely as entertainment media. They increasingly serve as informal learning resources, sources of cultural exposure, and integral components of students' digital literacy ecosystems. This shift reflects an expanding intersection between digital entertainment and educational engagement in contemporary academic life.

Netflix, as a leading global streaming platform, has experienced rapid growth in Indonesia, with more than 220 million subscribers worldwide and substantial expansion across Southeast Asia (Ramachandran, 2025). This trend illustrates the wider integration of streaming platforms into students' routines, including access to documentaries and knowledge oriented audiovisual content. The growing reliance on multimedia platforms signals a corresponding shift in digital literacy practices from predominantly text based learning toward multimodal digital consumption. Such practices align with higher

education demands in which students are expected to evaluate, curate, and engage critically with digital information across diverse formats.

Within this evolving digital environment, Fear of Missing Out has emerged as a salient psychological construct influencing student behavior. Fear of Missing Out refers to the apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences without one's participation, encompassing perceived social exclusion, the need for connectedness, and anxiety about missing important information. Digital environments intensify this condition by continuously exposing individuals to socially salient content, trending programs, and peer activities (Chakrabarti, 2024).. In higher education settings, Fear of Missing Out is not driven only by entertainment trends. It is also strengthened by educational or academic peer pressure to stay updated with streaming content perceived as relevant for informal learning, classroom conversations, or cultural literacy, creating concern about being left behind in academically meaningful digital discussions. Generation Z is particularly vulnerable to Fear of Missing Out due to developmental needs for social validation and pervasive online engagement (Hayran & Anik, 2021). This psychological pressure influences their digital media choices, including the desire to keep up with Netflix content that becomes a shared reference among peers.

Subscription intention, defined as an individual's likelihood to subscribe to a paid digital service, is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Bosnjak et al., 2020). Subscription decisions are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In digital contexts, intention is also associated with perceived usefulness, trust, and emotional involvement (Mehmeti Bajrami et al., 2022), as well as technological affordances described in the Technology Acceptance Model (Gaffar et al., 2022; Wixom & Todd, 2005). Research on streaming services indicates that content quality, user experience, and social influence significantly determine subscription intention (Aljarrah et al., 2016).

Additional insights from Indonesia are provided by Hendrayati and colleagues, who have examined determinants of digital platform usage and digital marketing strategies in several studies. (Hendrayati et al., 2020) showed that digital service quality and perceived value significantly shape users' loyalty and continued engagement with digital platforms, underscoring the importance of platform reliability and user experience. Gunawan et al. (2023) demonstrated that social media marketing and peer-driven digital engagement enhance behavioral motivation, offering an academic explanation for how social influence, a central mechanism of Fear of Missing Out, affects digital consumption decisions. Hendrayati et al., (2024) further highlighted the roles of trust, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use in predicting digital platform usage intention, reinforcing the explanatory value of the Technology Acceptance Model and the Theory of Planned Behaviour for subscription behaviors. More recently, (Hendrayati et al., 2025) examined customer relationship management and value creation as mediators of market performance, demonstrating how digital platforms leverage relational strategies to enhance user engagement and retention. Additionally, Hendrayati et al. (2024) explored the impact of artificial intelligence on digital marketing, showing how AI-driven personalization and recommendation systems influence consumer behavior in competitive digital landscapes such as streaming platforms. Collectively, these findings support the view that Fear of Missing Out, social influence, digital literacy, perceived digital value, and platform intelligence converge to shape students' intention to subscribe to streaming platforms such as Netflix.

From a theoretical standpoint, the relationship between Fear of Missing Out and subscription intention can be interpreted through Uses and Gratifications Theory, which posits that individuals seek media to satisfy informational, emotional, and social integration needs Hendrayati et al. (2024). Fear of Missing Out heightens these needs by generating pressure to remain connected and avoid exclusion. Social Comparison Theory (Matthews & Kelemen, 2024) explains how individuals evaluate themselves relative to others, and in digital contexts such evaluations can motivate students to consume the same content as peers in order to maintain shared cultural and academic reference points. Empirical research corroborates that Fear of Missing Out predicts digital consumption behaviors among adolescents and young adults .(Ali Al-Abyadh, 2025; Aljarrah et al., 2016; Guirao et al., n.d.; Pham et al., 2025; T. Wu et al., 2024)

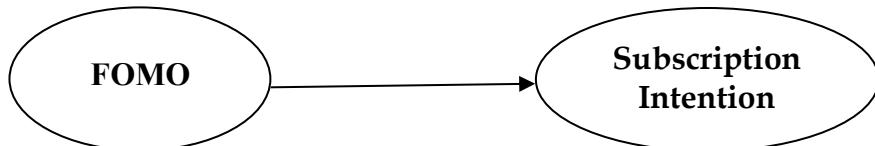
Despite the expanding literature, few studies have examined Fear of Missing Out in relation to subscription intention for streaming platforms among university students in Indonesia. This study addresses this gap by investigating the effect of Fear of Missing Out on Netflix subscription intention among Generation Z university students in Indonesia. The conceptual framework illustrating this relationship is presented in Figure 1.

While digital literacy practices are increasingly relevant in understanding how students navigate multimodal platforms, this study focuses specifically on the psychological mechanism of FOMO as a primary driver of subscription intention. Digital literacy represents a promising avenue for future research, particularly in examining how information evaluation and curation skills might moderate the relationship between FOMO and media consumption behaviors.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of FOMO among Generation Z university students in Indonesia?
2. What is the level of Netflix subscription intention among Generation Z university students?
3. Does Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) significantly influence Netflix subscription intention among Generation Z university students in Indonesia?

Research Hypothesis



H1: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has a positive and significant effect on Netflix subscription intention among Generation Z students.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach with an explanatory research design. The design was selected to examine the causal relationship between the independent variable, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and the dependent variable, Netflix subscription intention, among university students. Explanatory research is appropriate for studies aiming to test hypotheses and determine the direction and magnitude of relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Population and Sample

The target population comprised Generation Z university students aged 18–24 who reside in urban areas and actively use digital streaming services. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure that respondents met specific behavioral and demographic criteria relevant to the research context.

Inclusion criteria:

1. Active Netflix users for at least the past three months.
2. Having experienced FOMO at least once in relation to digital or streaming content (based on the FOMO screening scale).
3. Aged 18–24 years (Generation Z).
4. Registered as an active university student (verified through student ID).

Sample Adequacy

A total of 385 respondents were obtained, which meets methodological standards for explanatory modeling. The sample size satisfies:

1. The recommended minimum of $n \geq 50-100$ for regression and PLS-SEM analyses (Ghozali, 2020).
2. Cochran's (1977) sample size formula using $Z = 1.96$, $p = 0.5$, and 10% error margin, yielding a minimum of 89 respondents.

Thus, the sample of 100 is considered adequate and statistically reliable for this study.

Participant Characteristics

To strengthen the contextual relevance of the study particularly in the educational domain demographic information was collected, including:

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Academic program/major
4. Semester level
5. Average daily streaming duration
6. Digital literacy exposure (e.g., frequency of accessing online learning materials)

These data helped ensure that the participants represented students actively engaged with digital ecosystems, aligning with the study's theoretical focus on digital literacy and media usage in higher education.

Research Instruments

FOMO Scale

FOMO was measured using an adaptation of the scale developed by Przybylski et al. (2013). Items were contextualized for streaming media consumption. Sample items include:

1. "I feel anxious when I do not know what series or movies are trending."
2. "I worry that my friends have a better viewing experience than I do."
3. "I feel compelled to watch content that others are discussing."

Responses were captured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Subscription Intention Scale

Subscription intention was measured using items adapted from Venkatesh et al. (2003) and Bhattacherjee (2001). Sample items include:

1. "I intend to subscribe to Netflix within the next 3 months."
2. "I am willing to pay for a Netflix subscription."
3. "I would recommend Netflix to others."

All items were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected online via Google Forms, and the survey link was distributed through university WhatsApp groups and student communication networks. The questionnaire included the main constructs Fear of Missing Out and subscription intention for testing H1, as well as items measuring digital literacy and digital media engagement as contextual variables aligned with the study objective. These contextual variables were used only in descriptive analysis to profile students' digital practices and to enrich interpretation of the findings, and they were not incorporated into the H1 structural model. Accordingly, the R squared value reported for H1 reflects the proportion of variance in subscription intention explained solely by Fear of Missing Out, while the explanatory contribution of digital literacy and digital media engagement was not estimated in this model and is reserved for future moderation or extended model testing. All respondents provided electronic informed consent prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and no identifying information was collected beyond eligibility verification.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and SmartPLS 4. The following analytical procedures were applied:

1. Descriptive Statistics

Used to summarize demographic characteristics, variable means, and standard deviations.

2. Validity Testing

- a. Convergent validity assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50).
- b. Discriminant validity evaluated through Fornell-Larcker and HTMT criteria.

3. Reliability Testing

- a. Cronbach's Alpha (acceptable if > 0.70).
- b. Composite Reliability (acceptable if > 0.70).

4. Hypothesis Testing (PLS-SEM)

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with bootstrapping (500 resamples) was used to test the hypothesized relationship between FOMO and subscription intention. Model evaluation followed Hair et al. (2018) concerning:

- a. Path coefficients (β)
- b. t-statistics and p-values
- c. R^2 for model explanatory power

This technique is appropriate for exploratory and predictive modeling in studies involving psychological and behavioral constructs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondent Characteristics

Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, a total of 385 were returned and deemed valid for analysis, yielding a high response rate of 96.25%. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (n=385)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	178	46.2
	Female	207	53.8
Age	18-20 years old	152	39.5
	21-23 years old	167	43.4
	24-25 years old	66	17.1
Semester	1-4	189	49.1
	5-8	196	50.9
Income	IDR1.000.000	234	60.8
	IDR1.000.000-3.000.000	121	31.4
	>IDR3.000.000	30	7.8
Streaming Usage	1 hour/day	67	17.4
	1-3 hours/day	198	51.4
	>3 hours/day	120	31.2

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the 385 student respondents. The gender distribution is relatively balanced, with females accounting for 53.8 percent and males 46.2 percent, indicating a slight predominance of female participants. The age profile is concentrated in the 21 to 23 year group at 43.4 percent, followed by 18 to 20 years at 39.5 percent and 24 to 25 years at 17.1 percent. This pattern corresponds to the typical age composition of undergraduate students in the Indonesian higher education context. The semester distribution is also nearly even, with students in semesters 5 to 8 comprising 50.9 percent and those in semesters 1 to 4 comprising 49.1 percent, suggesting representation from early through mid to late stages of study.

The economic background of respondents is dominated by the lowest income category, with 60.8 percent reporting monthly income at or below IDR 1,000,000. Respondents earning IDR 1,000,000 to 3,000,000 represent 31.4 percent, while those earning above IDR 3,000,000 represent 7.8 percent. This indicates that the sample largely consists of students with limited purchasing power, which is relevant for interpreting behavior toward paid streaming services. Streaming usage shows that 51.4 percent of respondents spend 1 to 3 hours per day on streaming platforms, 31.2 percent spend more than 3 hours per day and 17.4 percent spend about 1 hour per day. The approximate mean streaming duration is 2.45 hours per day with an estimated standard deviation of 1.11 hours, reflecting substantial and moderately varied digital exposure among participants.

Descriptive Statistics for Main Constructs

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the two main constructs examined in this study.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for FOMO and Subscription Intention

Construct	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Interpretation
FOMO	3.87	0.92	1.00	5.00	Moderate-to-High
Subscription Intention	4.12	0.78	1.50	5.00	Predominantly High

The descriptive analysis reveals that students exhibit moderate-to-high levels of FOMO ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.92$) on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating that Generation Z university students experience substantial psychological pressure related to missing out on trending Netflix content and social discourse. This level of FOMO is consistent with the developmental vulnerability of this age group, as documented in prior research on social comparison and digital connectivity. Notably, the standard deviation of 0.92 suggests considerable variation across respondents, with some students experiencing significantly higher FOMO than others.

The subscription intention scale demonstrates predominantly high levels ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.78$), reflecting strong willingness among respondents to subscribe to or maintain Netflix subscriptions. This elevated mean, coupled with the relatively lower standard deviation ($SD = 0.78$) compared to FOMO, indicates more consensus among students regarding subscription intention, suggesting that Netflix subscription is widely viewed as desirable or necessary within this student population. The proximity of the two means (3.87 vs. 4.12) reveals that while FOMO is moderately to highly experienced, subscription intention is consistently high across the sample, underscoring the potency of psychological pressure in driving consumption behavior.

The range of responses for both constructs (FOMO: 1.00–5.00; Subscription Intention: 1.50–5.00) demonstrates that respondents represent a spectrum of FOMO experience and subscription readiness, validating the purposive sampling approach and the heterogeneity of the student population examined.

Validity and Reliability Testing

Convergent Validity Testing

The results of the convergent validity testing indicate that all indicators have factor loadings > 0.7 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.5 . Table 3 shows a summary of the validity testing results.

Table 3. Convergent Validity Test Results

Variable	Indicator	Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability
FOMO	FOMO1	0.823	0.642	0.876
	FOMO2	0.854		
	FOMO3	0.798		
	FOMO4	0.812		
Behavioural Intention to Subscribe	INT1	0.876	0.681	0.892
	INT2	0.843		
	INT3	0.831		
	INT4	0.795		

The results of the convergent validity test in Table 3 show that all indicators for both the FOMO construct and the behavioral intention to subscribe construct have factor loadings above 0.70, with AVE values of 0.642 and 0.681, respectively. These values meet the recommended criteria for convergent validity. The discriminant validity test using the HTMT ratio also indicated values below 0.85 for all construct pairs, confirming that each construct is empirically distinct. Furthermore, the reliability assessment

demonstrated that the Cronbach's Alpha values for FOMO (0.826) and subscription intention (0.843), as well as their Composite Reliability values (0.876 and 0.892), were all above the minimum threshold of 0.70. These results indicate that the measurement instruments used in this study are both valid and reliable.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 4 presents the results of the hypothesis testing using the PLS-SEM approach. The analysis shows that FOMO has a positive and significant effect on Netflix subscription intention, with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.432$, a t-value of 8.672, and a p-value of < 0.001 . These values exceed the conventional thresholds for statistical significance, indicating that the relationship between the two variables is both meaningful and robust. The R^2 value of 0.432 demonstrates that FOMO accounts for 43.2% of the variance in subscription intention, suggesting a moderate explanatory power of the model.

Table 4. Hypothesis Test Results

Correlation	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Conclusion
FOMO → behavioural intention to subscribe	0.432	8.672	<0.001	Accepted

These results confirm the acceptance of hypothesis H1, indicating that FOMO has a positive and significant effect on Netflix subscription intention. The effect size ($\beta = 0.432$) reflects a moderate-to-strong influence based on established benchmarks in social science research (Cohen, 1988). This finding is particularly relevant in an educational context, as it shows that students' psychological responses in digital environments, such as FOMO, play a measurable role in shaping their digital media usage patterns, which form part of their broader digital literacy practices.

Discussion

The results confirm that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has a positive and significant influence on Netflix subscription intention among Generation Z university students. The path coefficient ($\beta = 0.432$, $p < 0.001$) indicates a moderate to strong effect, showing that socially charged psychological pressure is a salient driver of students' willingness to pay for streaming access. This finding supports prior evidence that perceived enjoyment, peer pressure, and relevance of trending content shape subscription decisions in video streaming services (Piko et al., 2025). In the context of higher education, the result suggests that students' digital platform engagement is not only guided by functional needs but also by an affective motivation to remain socially connected to shared cultural discourse.

Digital literacy is central for interpreting this relationship because the study objective and novelty position FOMO within students' digital literacy ecosystems, even though digital literacy was not included in the H1 test. Digital literacy can be understood as a capability that shapes how students detect, evaluate, and respond to FOMO cues. Students with higher digital literacy are more likely to recognize algorithmic amplification of trends, distinguish informational value from social hype, and regulate consumption based on purpose. Such competencies can reduce reactive subscription behavior by enabling intentional media selection. Students with lower digital literacy may be more vulnerable to urgency and social comparison pressures, leading to more

impulsive subscription intention. This argument is consistent with scholarship indicating that digital literacy influences responsiveness to social and informational signals embedded in digital platforms and encourages more strategic digital choices (Hasbi et al., 2025; Škudienė et al., 2025).

A reciprocal pathway is also theoretically plausible. FOMO driven subscription may foster multimodal literacy development because subscription provides sustained access to audiovisual resources that require interpretation across visual, verbal, and auditory modes. Generation Z students increasingly encounter educational and knowledge oriented content on Netflix, such as documentaries, historical series, and biographical narratives, which can extend informal learning beyond classroom materials. Frequent engagement with such multimodal texts can enhance students' abilities to navigate digital information, interpret meaning across formats, and build critical media judgment. Prior studies highlight that psychological tendencies combined with media experience contribute not only to adoption of subscription platforms but also to the learning practices that follow platform use (Hasbi et al., 2025; Škudienė et al., 2025). This positions subscription intention as part of students' broader multimodal learning engagement rather than a purely entertainment oriented market choice.

Evidence from Indonesia further contextualizes these results. Research on digital service adoption shows that perceived usefulness, ease of use, and social influence are decisive for intention to adopt digital platforms (Hendrayati et al., 2020a). These mechanisms parallel the FOMO pathway observed here, since FOMO operates through social influence and perceived value of keeping up with peers. Work on platform optimization and intelligent recommendation systems in Indonesian digital markets indicates that well designed platforms can simultaneously serve leisure and informal learning needs by curating accessible and engaging content (Hendrayati et al., 2020). Findings on Netflix users in Indonesia also demonstrate that perceived usefulness and engagement sustain subscription related intentions, reinforcing the relevance of value evaluation alongside psychological drivers (Ramachandran, 2025).

The main finding should be interpreted through an integrated lens. FOMO heightens subscription intention, digital literacy likely conditions the strength and direction of this effect, and subscription behavior can in turn contribute to multimodal literacy growth through expanded digital media engagement. Streaming services thus operate within students' educational ecosystems by supporting informal learning, cultural awareness, and multimodal competence. These implications reinforce the need for higher education institutions to strengthen digital literacy programs that help students critically evaluate trending content, manage socially pressured consumption, and maximize academic benefits from streaming platforms.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: The Conclusion accurately summarizes the main finding that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) significantly and positively influences Generation Z university students' intention to subscribe to Netflix, explaining 43.2 percent of the variance in subscription intention. Descriptive results indicate that students exhibit moderate-to-high levels of FOMO and predominantly high subscription intentions, highlighting the strong psychological and social pressures that accompany their participation in digitally mediated environments. Through the structural model, FOMO was found to account for a substantial proportion of variance in subscription intention, underscoring its central

role in shaping students' decisions to adopt streaming platforms as part of their daily digital routines and learning-related activities. These findings affirm that FOMO functions not only as a consumer-behavior variable but also as a psychological factor embedded in students' media engagement and informal learning experiences, thereby providing a robust empirical basis for the study's practical implications for platform providers and educational institutions. **Implications:** For platform providers and digital strategists, these findings emphasize the need to account for emotional and socially driven triggers in shaping subscription decisions among student audiences. Features such as trending menus, social sharing or interaction tools, and adaptive personalization can increase engagement because they align with students' motivation to remain up to date with peer referenced content. For educational institutions, the implications extend beyond recognizing streaming as an informal learning space. Digital literacy initiatives should be strengthened with an explicit dual focus: first, building students' capacity to critically evaluate and curate digital content across multimodal formats, and second, helping students regulate FOMO driven consumption through skills in self monitoring, time management, and reflective decision making about media use. In practice, this means universities should not only teach credibility assessment and information verification, but also provide structured guidance on balanced and intentional digital engagement so that students can benefit academically from streaming resources without experiencing disruption to cognitive focus or study routines. Integrating high quality educational streaming content into coursework, coupled with training on purposeful media selection and FOMO management, can support multimodal literacy development while mitigating risks associated with excessive socially pressured viewing. **Further Research:** Future research should broaden the explanatory framework of subscription intention by incorporating additional determinants not examined in this study, including perceived usefulness, affordability, platform trust, and the academic relevance of streaming content, because students' willingness to subscribe is likely shaped by both psychological pressures and value-based evaluations. Subsequent studies are encouraged to test moderating variables to clarify heterogeneity in the FOMO pathway across student groups, particularly digital literacy level, study discipline, academic workload, and social media intensity, as these factors may condition exposure to FOMO triggers and the capacity to regulate digital consumption. Longitudinal designs would be valuable for capturing shifts in FOMO effects and subscription behavior as platform features, recommendation algorithms, and student media habits evolve over time. Comparative research across multiple streaming services such as Disney Plus, Amazon Prime, and local OTT platforms, as well as across different regional or institutional higher education settings, would strengthen generalizability and reveal context-specific dynamics of digital media adoption. Finally, distinguishing academic versus non-academic content consumption patterns could illuminate whether FOMO-driven subscription facilitates multimodal literacy and informal learning or primarily reinforces entertainment-centered use, thereby informing institutional interventions that promote productive digital engagement while mitigating risks associated with excessive FOMO-based media consumption.

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