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## From social media use to FOMO: The moderating power of self-control among Gen Z blind box buyers

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the role of self-control as a moderating variable in the relationship between social media use and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among Generation Z individuals who purchase blind boxes in the Greater Jakarta Area (Jabodetabek). The background of this research is rooted in the rising consumption trend of blind boxes, which is influenced by digital media and potentially reinforces the tendency toward FOMO. This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational predictive design. The research participants consisted of 117 Generation Z individuals residing in Jabodetabek who used social media for at least one hour per day and had purchased blind boxes within the last year. Data were collected using the Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS) by Jenkins-Guarnieri et al. (2013) ( $\alpha=0.840$ ), the FOMO Scale by Zhang et al. (2020) ( $\alpha=0.977$ ), and the Brief Self-Control Scale (BSCS) by Ferrari et al. (2009) ( $\alpha=0.967$ ). The data were analyzed using Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA). The results indicate that self-control moderates the relationship between social media use and FOMO ( $p=0.017$ ;  $\Delta R^2=0.010$ ), where individuals with low self-control tend to experience higher FOMO. These findings affirm the importance of self-control in helping Generation Z adaptively manage digital social pressures in the social media era.

**Keywords:** blind box; fear of missing out; generation Z; self-control; social media use

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of globalization and advancements in digital technology have significantly transformed consumer behavior patterns. Consumers no longer seek only the functional value of a product but also the emotional and symbolic experiences that accompany it (Hazizi et al., 2025). One trend representing this shift is the rise of blind box products, which contain random items that are revealed only upon opening and provide a sense of surprise and emotional engagement that encourages continued purchases (Miao et al., 2023; Ren & Ma, 2024). This trend has grown rapidly, especially among Generation Z, who are highly active on social media and receptive to global trends (Hu, 2024).

This phenomenon is clearly visible in the Jabodetabek, which has become a growth center for blind box stores such as Pop Mart and a frequent venue for Blind Box Festivals held in various shopping malls (ASRI, 2025a; ASRI, 2025b). The enthusiasm surrounding blind boxes reflects not only an interest in collectible items but also the social dynamics shaped through digital interactions. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok reinforce the culture of sharing purchasing and unboxing experiences, fostering social comparison and the desire to obtain items that others possess. In this context, social media functions not only as a source of entertainment but also as a social space that generates psychological pressure to follow trends to avoid being left out (Putri et al., 2024).

This type of pressure is closely related to the concept of FOMO, defined as the anxious feeling that one may be missing a pleasurable or important social experience (Przybylski et al., 2013). FOMO arises when individuals believe that others are engaging in rewarding experiences that they themselves are not part of, which increases their desire to remain continually connected to social media and monitor the activities of others (McGinnis, 2020). Research consistently shows that greater social media use is associated with higher levels of FOMO (Bloemen & Coninck, 2020; Sudheer & Saligram, 2023; VP & Veronica, 2020).

Social media use refers to the extent to which social media is integrated into individuals' social behavior, daily routines, and emotional experiences. According to Jenkins-Guarnieri et al. (2013), social media use reflects not only the frequency of engagement with digital platforms but also the degree to which these platforms are embedded in everyday life and carry social and emotional significance for the individual. The more individuals engage with social media, the more frequently they are exposed to curated information about others' experiences, achievements, and consumption activities. Such exposure may create the perception that others are having more rewarding experiences, which in turn increases the tendency to experience FOMO. However, the strength of this relationship varies across individuals, indicating the presence of internal factors that influence the degree to which people experience FOMO despite similar levels of social media exposure (Maciel-Saldierna et al., 2024).

One such internal factor is self-control, which is defined as the ability to regulate impulses, emotions, and behaviors in alignment with long-term goals (Baumeister et al., 2007). According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000), self-control is associated with the type of motivational regulation that directs behavior. Individuals who operate with autonomous forms of regulation, such as identified or integrated regulation, tend to act based on their personal values and goals. Individuals characterized by controlled forms of regulation, such as external or introjected regulation, are more susceptible to social pressure and the desire for approval (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In the context of social media use and blind box purchasing, individuals with high self-control are more likely to rely on autonomous motivation, which allows them to resist impulsive urges to follow fleeting trends. Those with low self-control are more easily influenced by controlled motivation shaped by social comparison or the fear of being left behind.

Previous studies have demonstrated that self-control is negatively associated with FOMO (Maza & Aprianty, 2022; Amelisastri et al., 2024) and plays a role in regulating urges related to social media use (Oberst et al., 2017). Therefore, self-control may moderate the relationship between social media use and FOMO. The degree of self-control an individual possesses can influence the extent to which social media use affects the likelihood of experiencing FOMO. Based on this theoretical foundation, the present study aims to examine the relationship between social media use and FOMO and to investigate

the role of self-control as a moderating variable. Conceptually, it is hypothesized that social media use is positively associated with FOMO, but this association is weaker among individuals with higher self-control.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational predictive design to examine the extent to which one variable could predict another (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018). The participants consisted of 117 Generation Z individuals, aged 13-28 years, who resided in Jabodetabek, used social media for at least one hour per day, and had purchased blind boxes within the last year. For participants under the age of 17 years, a parental consent form was required and had to be signed by a guardian before completing the questionnaire. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. The minimum sample size was determined through power analysis ( $f^2=0.15$ ;  $\alpha=0.05$ ;  $1-\beta=0.95$ ) using the G\*Power 3.1.9.4 software (Faul et al., 2009), which indicated a minimum requirement of 89 participants. The actual number of participants ( $N=117$ ) met and exceeded this threshold.

FOMO was measured using the two-dimensional version developed by Zhang et al. (2020). This scale consists of nine items across two dimensions, namely personal FOMO and social FOMO, and was adapted to the context of blind box purchasing. All items were positive and measured using a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The scale demonstrated an excellent reliability coefficient ( $\alpha=0.977$ ). Social media use was measured using the SMUIS, which comprises 10 items across two dimensions: Social Integration and Emotional Connection and Integration into Social Routines (Jenkins-Guarnieri et al., 2013). Nine items were positive, and one item was negative. The scale was answered using a 6-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The total reliability value of the scale was 0.840. Self-control was measured using the BSCS, which consists of 13 items covering two dimensions: general self-discipline and impulse control (Ferrari et al., 2009). Nine items were negative and four were positive, with a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The scale had a total reliability of 0.967. All scales used in this study were adapted into Indonesian and reviewed by expert judgment to ensure their linguistic clarity and content relevance prior to data collection.

All scales demonstrated good item validity, with significant item-total correlations ( $p<0.05$ ;  $r>0.1816$ ). The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 23 through descriptive analysis and regression assumption testing. The regression assumption tests included the examination of residual normality, linearity of the relationship between the variables, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity (Iba & Wardhana, 2024). The main analysis was conducted using MRA to test the role of self-control in moderating the relationship between social media use and FOMO.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Results

This study involved 117 participants, all of whom belonged to Generation Z, with an age range of 13 to 28 years. Most participants were female, belonged to the 20-28 age group, and resided in Jakarta. Pop Mart was the most frequently purchased brand of blind boxes, and Instagram was the most frequently used social media platform. The demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics**

Characteristics	Category	n	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	50	42.7
	Female	67	57.3
Age	13-19 years old	39	33.3
	20-28 years old	78	66.7
Domicile	Jakarta	48	41

	Bogor	6	5.1
	Depok	19	16.2
	Tangerang	33	28.2
	Bekasi	11	9.4
Blind Box Brand Purchased	Pop Mart	49	41.9
	BNS Hype	22	18.8
	M&G Life	5	4.3
	Miniso	16	13.7
	Oh! Some	21	17.9
	Others	4	3.4
Most Frequently Used Platform	WhatsApp	6	5.1
	Instagram	61	52.1
	TikTok	30	25.6
	X	12	10.3
	Threads	3	2.6
	Discord	5	4.3

The FOMO, social media use, and self-control scores were categorized as low, moderate, or high based on percentile scores. Scores below the 27th percentile were categorized as low, scores between the 27th and 73rd percentiles were categorized as moderate, and scores above the 73rd percentile were categorized as high (Susanto, 2025). Based on the categorization results, most participants had a moderate FOMO level (53.0%). For the social media use variable, most participants were in the moderate category (54.7%). Meanwhile, for self-control, the majority of participants were in the moderate category (51.3%). These findings indicate that the participants generally possessed intermediate levels of FOMO, used social media moderately, and exhibited reasonably good self-control in managing their personal behaviors and impulses. Table 2 presents the categorization results of the study.

**Table 2. Categorization Results**

Variable	Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)
FOMO	24.8	53.0	22.2
Social Media Use	29.1	54.7	16.2
Self-Control	22.2	51.3	26.5

Prior to conducting the Moderated Regression Analysis, classical assumption tests were performed to ensure the viability of the analytical model. The assumption tests included the assessment of residual normality, linearity of the relationship between variables, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity. The results of the residual normality test showed a significance value of 0.200 ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that the residuals were normally distributed and met the regression assumption. The linearity test between social media use and FOMO yielded a significance. The linearity value was 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ) and a Sig. The deviation from linearity value was 0.637 ( $p > 0.05$ ), confirming that the relationship between the variables was linear. The Glejser test results showed that all variables had a significance value above 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating the absence of heteroscedasticity. Furthermore, the multicollinearity test results revealed tolerance values above 0.80 ( $> 0.10$ ) and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 2 ( $< 10$ ), signifying that no multicollinearity occurred. Based on these findings, all regression assumptions were met, and the Moderated Regression Analysis could proceed to test the effect of social media use on FOMO with self-control as the moderating variable. Table 3 presents the results of the classical regression assumption tests.

**Table 3. Classical Regression Assumption Tests**

Type of Test	Result	Criteria	Conclusion
Residual Normality	$p = 0.200$	$p > 0.05$	Met
Linearity	$p$ Linearity = 0.000 $p$ Deviation = 0.637	$p$ Linearity $< 0.05$ $p$ Deviation $> 0.05$	Met

Homoscedasticity	$p = 0.442$	$p > 0.05$	Met
Multicollinearity	Tolerance = 0.841 VIF = 1.189	Tolerance > 0.10 VIF < 10	Met

MRA was conducted to test the effect of social media use on FOMO and the role of self-control as a moderating variable. Testing was performed using three analytical models. Model 1 tested the direct effect of social media use on FOMO. Model 2 added self-control as an additional predictor, while Model 3 introduced the interaction term between social media use and self-control to examine the moderating effect.

The regression analysis results showed that social media use had a positive and significant effect on FOMO ( $\beta=0.461$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), with an  $R^2$  value of 0.205. This means that the higher the intensity of social media use, the higher the level of FOMO experienced by the individual. When the self-control variable was included in the model, the results indicated that social media use remained positively significant ( $\beta=0.284$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), while self-control had a significantly negative effect on FOMO ( $\beta=-0.761$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). The  $R^2$  value increased to 0.757, meaning that both variables together explained 75.7% of the variance in FOMO. Furthermore, the analysis results of the interaction between social media use and self-control showed a significant interaction effect ( $\beta=-0.118$ ;  $p=0.017$ ), with an  $R^2$  of 0.767. This finding indicates that self-control moderates the relationship between social media use and FOMO. The negative direction of the coefficient suggests that the higher an individual's self-control, the weaker the influence of social media use on FOMO. Thus, self-control attenuates the relationship between the intensity of social media use and the tendency to experience FOMO among Generation Z blind box buyers in Jabodetabek. Table 4 presents the results of the moderation regression analysis.

**Table 4. MRA Results**

Model	Variable	$\beta$	$p$	$R^2$
Model 1	Social Media Use → FOMO	0.461	0.000	0.205
Model 2	Social Media Use → FOMO	0.284	0.000	0.757
	Self-Control → FOMO	-0.761	0.000	
Model 3	Social Media Use → FOMO	0.280	0.000	0.767
	Self-Control → FOMO	-0.749	0.000	
	Social Media Use * Self-Control → FOMO	-0.118	0.017	

As an additional analysis, this study examined the differences in FOMO, social media use, and self-control based on the participants' demographic characteristics. The analysis results showed that most demographic variables did not indicate significant differences across the three research variables ( $p>0.05$ ). However, two significant results were found: differences based on domicile and daily social media use duration. The analysis based on domicile revealed a significant difference in social media use ( $p=0.012<0.05$ ). Participants residing in Bogor showed the highest level of social media use (mean rank=82.00), while those from Jakarta showed the lowest level (mean rank=49.32). However, this result should be interpreted with caution because the number of participants across the domicile groups was not evenly distributed, with fewer participants from Bogor and more participants from Jakarta. Therefore, this finding may not fully reflect the differences attributable to the domicile itself. Furthermore, a significant difference was found based on the duration of daily social media use. For the FOMO variable, participants who used social media for more than 8 hours per day had the highest level of FOMO (mean rank=75.10;  $p=0.04<0.05$ ), while participants who used social media for 0-2 hours per day had the lowest level (mean rank=7.50). Similar results were found for the social media use variable ( $p=0.000<0.05$ ), where the group with a duration of more than 8 hours per day showed a higher level of social media integration into daily life (mean rank=74.74), and the group with a duration of 0-2 hours per day had the lowest level (mean rank=17.67).

### 3.2. Discussion

The results show that social media use has a positive and significant effect on the FOMO of Generation Z blind box buyers in Jabodetabek. This means that the higher the integration of social media into an individual's social and emotional life, the greater their tendency to experience FOMO. This finding is consistent with the research by Bloemen and Coninck (2020), VP and Veronica (2020), and Sudheer and Saligram (2023), which indicated that intensive social media use amplifies the FOMO on others' social experiences.

This relationship is particularly meaningful in the context of Generation Z, who have grown up amid the integration of digital technology since adolescence. For this generation, online activity is not only a communication tool but also a part of self-expression and the development of social identity (Espejo et al., 2024). Digital connectivity provides a way for them to seek social recognition and self-validation, and this attachment makes them more vulnerable to online social comparisons. When viewing posts from friends or public figures, individuals often judge themselves based on what others are doing or possessing, which creates pressure to remain engaged in digital social interactions. In the context of blind box purchasing, this pressure can emerge when individuals feel encouraged to buy after seeing unboxing content on social media platforms. This act reflects not merely a consumptive tendency but an emotional response to the desire to stay connected and be recognized as part of the collector community. Therefore, social media functions as a social space that strengthens emotional attachment while also contributing to FOMO when that connection feels incomplete.

Individuals have a basic psychological need for relatedness, which refers to the need to feel connected to and accepted by others (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When this need is unmet, individuals become more susceptible to controlled motivation, which includes FOMO, and drives behavior aimed at maintaining social connectedness by staying active on social media. SDT also proposes two additional basic needs: autonomy and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When these needs are fulfilled, individuals are more likely to regulate their behavior based on internalized values and personal goals, which characterizes autonomous motivation, such as identified or integrated regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). When these needs are not fulfilled, behavior is influenced by internal or external pressure, which represents controlled motivation, such as external or introjected regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In this study, self-control plays an important role in regulating these types of motivation. The results showed that self-control moderated the relationship between social media use and FOMO. Individuals with high self-control can engage with social media without losing autonomy in their decision-making process, whereas those with low self-control tend to react more strongly to social pressure. Based on the SDT framework, this difference reflects variations in motivational regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Individuals with high self-control are more likely to operate with autonomous motivation and make decisions based on personal values. Individuals with low self-control are more likely to operate with controlled motivation and make decisions based on the need for acceptance. In the context of blind box purchasing, this is demonstrated by differences in the purchase motives. Individuals with autonomous regulation seek enjoyment through collecting, whereas those with controlled regulation buy blind boxes to maintain their social status within the collector community. An additional result shows that individuals who use social media for more than eight hours per day exhibit the highest levels of FOMO. This result is consistent with Bloemen and Coninck (2020), who found that prolonged social media use increases exposure to others' activities and therefore heightens FOMO.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the interaction between basic psychological needs and self-control plays an essential role in shaping the digital well-being of Gen Z. When self-control functions well, social media can serve as a healthy medium for fulfilling the need for relatedness and self-expression without compromising personal autonomy. When self-control diminishes, digital social pressure more easily triggers FOMO and consumptive behaviors, such as blind box purchasing, without thoughtful consideration. Therefore, self-control can be understood as a psychological mechanism that helps maintain a balance between the desire for social connectedness and the need for personal independence among Generation Z in an era of pervasive digital connectivity.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that self-control plays a central role in reducing the influence of social media use on the development of FOMO. Individuals with high self-control can engage with social media more intentionally and value-driven, allowing them to preserve their autonomy in decision-making processes. In contrast, individuals with low self-control are more susceptible to external social pressures and, therefore, experience higher levels of FOMO. Interpreted through the SDT framework, these results indicate that strong self-control supports autonomous motivation, whereas weak self-control increases reliance on controlled motivation that arises from the need for social approval. Additional observations also highlight that individuals who spend long periods on social media display higher FOMO levels, suggesting that excessive exposure can intensify digital social pressure. Overall, the results affirm that all the proposed hypotheses were supported. Social media use significantly increased FOMO, and self-control effectively moderated this relationship by weakening its intensity. These findings emphasize the importance of self-control as a psychological mechanism that helps individuals navigate digital environments without compromising their emotional well-being.

Theoretically, this study underscores the role of self-control in managing digital social pressure and maintaining healthy motivation regulation. Future research should broaden the behavioral context beyond blind box purchasing to include other forms of consumptive behavior, such as online shopping or virtual item purchases. Longitudinal or experimental approaches would also be valuable for examining how self-control and FOMO evolve over time. Practically, the findings can inform the development of psychoeducational programs in educational settings and counseling services that focus on strengthening self-control, improving online time management, and fostering awareness of digital impulses. Digital literacy initiatives that promote reflective and critical engagement with social media are essential to ensure that Generation Z uses digital platforms in a balanced, intentional, and psychologically adaptive manner.

#### **Ethical Approval**

Not Applicable

#### **Informed Consent Statement**

Not Applicable

#### **Authors' Contributions**

JT was responsible for the conceptual development of the study, including identifying the core research focus and preparing the initial manuscript. JT also performed the formal data analysis and ensured that the analytical approach aligned with the study objectives. FIRD contributed to the design of the methodological procedures and supported the validation process throughout the study. FIRD also provided essential resources and participated in refining the manuscript to enhance its clarity and academic rigor. WT supported the validation activities and contributed to securing the resources required for this study. WT also played a role in reviewing and editing the manuscript to enhance its overall quality and coherence.

#### **Disclosure Statement**

The Author declares no conflict of interest.

## Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy reasons.

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This study did not receive any external funding.

## Notes on Contributors

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