The Application of Behaviorist Theory in Changing FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) Behavior in Generation Z

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Abstract

Generation Z is the highest user of social media, compared to other generations such as generation Y, X, and Baby Boomers. Where generation Z uses social media can last for more than two hours a day, of course there is a positive or negative influence depending on the individual responding to the stimulus. One of the impacts is an action called FoMO, Fear of Missing Out. The amount of survey data conducted on 638 teenagers in Indonesia that around 64.6% or 412 teenagers experience FoMO on social media. This study aims to overcome changes in FoMO behavior in Generation Z with the application of behavioristic theory. The research method used is qualitative research with a descriptive approach. The results showed that the behavioristic theory approach focuses on the influence of the environment and external conditions on one's behavior as well as understanding and managing one's own emotions through the approach Focus on yourself, limit the use of social media and gadgets, seek real connections, respect yourself, positive reinforcement, modeling system, desensitization, variable reinforcement, application of stimulus control techniques, and social skills training.

Keywords: behavioristic theory, FoMO, Generation Z.

INTRODUCTION

The current digital era is very linear with an increase in the use of social media in everyday life. Social media is not only used as a medium for long-distance communication but as a source of information that is very complete, fast and easily accessible anywhere and anytime (Cieleszky, 2017). Many from various generations use social media, ranging from generation Z, millennials, generation X, and the Baby Boomers generation. According to the results of the population census organized by the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2020, the percentage comparison of each generation in Indonesia includes Generation Z (birth year 1997 - 2012) as much as 27.94%, Millennial Generation / Gen Y (birth year 1981-1996) as much as 25.87%, Generation X (birth year 1965-1980) by 21.88%, Baby Boomers Generation (birth year 1946-1964) by 11.56% https://pskp.kemdikbud.go.id/. Based on these data, in Indonesia today the most generation is generation Z, of course there is a behavior that utilizes technology, one of which is social media as a medium that is widely used in everyday life. This is stated in the following data.
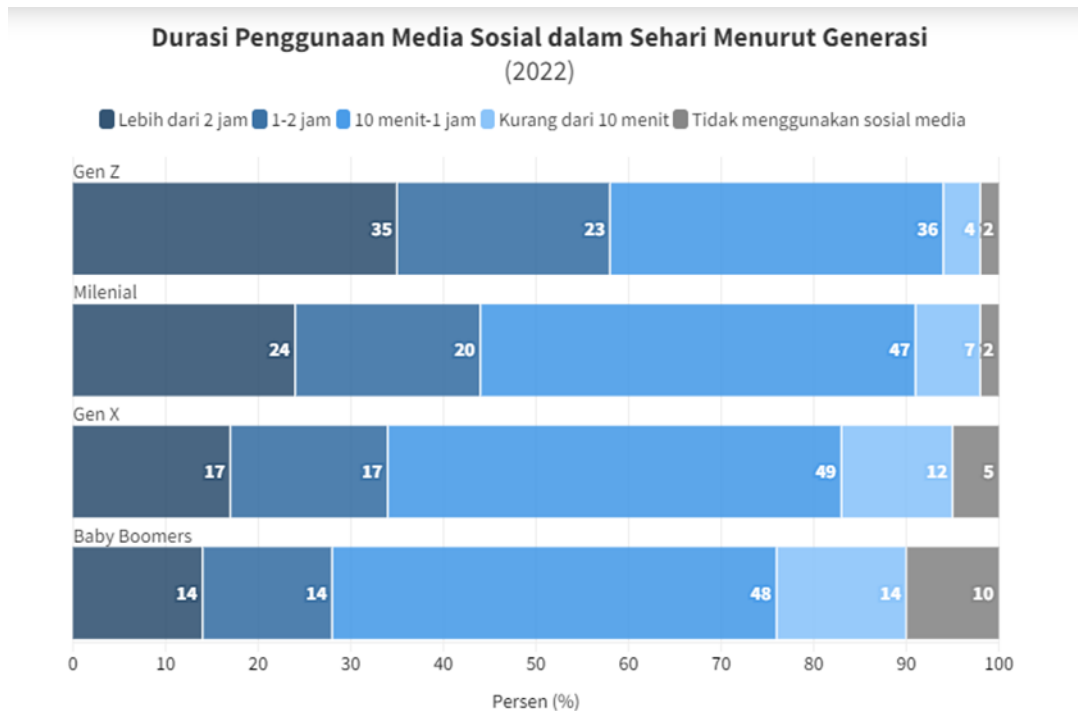
Figure 1. Data of Social Media Users in a Day from Various Generations in 2022
Source : dataindonesia.id, 2023

Based on the data in Table 1, it shows that the generation that uses social media the most in one day is Gen Z, which spends more than 2 hours as much as 35%, 1-2 hours 23%, and the rest less than 1 hour. Gen Z spends more time accessing social media than any other age group in the world. This can be seen from the results of McKinsey's survey of 41,960 respondents in 26 countries around the world, including Indonesia presented in dataindonesia.id. of course, social media has greatly influenced social behavior in generation Z. Social media changes behavior significantly in people's social life at almost all levels and social strata (Cahyono, 2016).

Based on the explanation above, of course there is a social behavior that affects the character of generation Z. Social behavior will be formed from the existence of an interaction and an environment that affects a person's behavior (Omaña, 2020). current behavioral changes in generation Z On average, the biggest concern is missing out on the latest issues, in Gen Z terms called FoMO, Fear of Missing Out. Another concern is that the physical appearance of themselves is not what they idealize on social media. (www.kompas.id, 2023) FoMO is a condition that causes a person to act beyond normal limits on social media. Not only are they afraid of missing out on news on social media, but they also deliberately post photos and texts that are not necessarily honest or self-promoting just because they want to appear current. Some people do not want to be left behind so they end up uploading their lives to social media in the form of posts about vacations, concerts, restaurants, weddings, children, and even their personal lives. FoMO syndrome tends to feel that something is wrong with their life if they don't have something to show for it interesting

to upload. A FoMO has negative feelings and emotions from social media sites due to feelings of envy towards other people's posts and lives (Apriyanti & Wijayani, 2024).

Total survey data conducted on 638 adolescents in Indonesia shows that around 64.6% or 412 adolescents experience FoMO on social media. This is certainly a problem that occurs in generation Z in Indonesia, thus this study aims to overcome this phenomenon which is studied through the theory of social behavior through behavioristic theory (Nasr et al., 2023).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The qualitative method is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of words that deeply explain human behavior and experiences (Wismanto, 2017). The descriptive approach seeks to systematically, factually, and accurately describe facts, characteristics, and relationships between phenomena (KHURUL'AIN, n.d.). Additionally, this study applies data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document studies, as well as data analysis techniques using thematic analysis and content analysis to identify patterns and themes in the obtained data.

This study integrates several data collection techniques to obtain a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under investigation (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In addition to in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document studies, data collection also includes focus group discussions (FGD) used to explore collective views and experiences so that group dynamics and interactions among participants can be revealed, open-ended questionnaires that allow respondents to express their opinions freely and in depth, as well as field notes and audio/video recordings that help document the context and nuances of interactions for further analysis. In terms of data analysis, the study employs thematic analysis to identify and organize the main themes that emerge, content analysis to systematically evaluate and categorize information based on the frequency and relationships between data elements, narrative analysis to construct stories and interpretations based on the sequence and context of events revealed by the participants, and data triangulation which combines various sources and analysis techniques to ensure the validity and accuracy of the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Generation Z is defined as those born between 1995 and 2011. Since smartphones and social media are so available, Gen Z has never known a world without them. This means they can manipulate a phone or tablet. So, they are the most tech-savvy generation. Gen Z doesn't care about diversity; they only notice it when it's not there. They grew up in a time of rapid bi-racial and minority population growth, becoming more diverse (Atkin et al., 2022). Generation Z has been identified in Indonesia as a generation driven by systems and customer service excellence. According to the same literature, Gen Z values systems and quick responses and desires to work in a structured environment that encourages their growth. The majority of them have stated that their strongest suit is their networking capabilities. In Indonesia, Gen-Z is confident in their ability

to communicate and make friends. At the same time, the availability of Indonesia's peaceful environment, the ability to access multiple devices: cheaper smartphones, the Tab, the internet, and its networks, as well as confident communication and networking skills, have been identified as key characteristics of Generation Z in Indonesia (Malini, 2021).

Basically, Generation Z was born in the digital era with the development of smartphones and social media that is growing rapidly, of course Gen Z's life is greatly influenced by cyberspace life, because basically the life they go through is very dominant in interacting with technology and even in their lives more interact with virtual life, especially social media. This of course greatly affects the pattern of thought, lifestyle, and even character that is indirectly affected by social media.

Social media as a source of diverse information without any filtering / filtering of the platform received, of course, filtering information can only be controlled by oneself, but if the source of information disseminated through social media is received by generation Z who is still a student between the ages of birth 2011-2005 around the age of 13 years to the age of 19 years, of course, this age is still in the category of adolescence. Adolescence is when humans are in their teens. Adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood that runs between the ages of 11 years and 21 years. Teenage behavior still has a behavior that has not been able to manage its emotions properly, so that the influence of social media will be absorbed in its character and life and even the existence of an anxiety behavior in adolescents called FoMO or Fear of Missing Out is a sense of fear feeling "left behind" because not following certain activities (Stead & Bibby, 2017).

FoMO or Fear of Missing Out is the fear of feeling "left behind" by not participating in certain activities. A feeling of anxiety and fear that arises in a person due to missing out on something new, such as news, trends, and other things. triggers the emergence of feelings of anxiety and then compares our lives with others who look more fun or happy (Stead & Bibby, 2017). Some of the causes of FoMO from the results of research conducted on adolescents in Samarinda City (Akbar et al., 2019) show that there is a fear of losing moments in early adolescents especially because of the unfulfillment of psychological needs for relatedness and self, namely individuals who do not have closeness with others and feel uncomfortable or unable to fulfill their own desires.

People who experience FoMO feel dissatisfied with their lives because they continue to compare their lives with the lives of others. This is of course there is a pressure on him so that he must be better than other people's lives. There are several characteristics of a person who experiences this FoMO including:
1) Always check their gadgets/cell phones. People who experience FoMO always check their phones immediately after waking up, even before going to bed, as if they don't want to miss the news.
2) Valuing social media over real life, leading to a desire for online recognition
3) Always interested in other people's lives.
4) Always want to know the latest gossip.
5) Spending more than you can afford to buy things that aren't necessary to keep up with the times

6) Can't say no to invitations. This often happens when a person continuously accepts any invitation that is actually uninteresting or unnecessary because they don't want to miss out on anything.
7) Uncontrollable FOMO emotions can lead to negative consequences such as fatigue, stress, depression, and even sleep problems.

Based on research (Stead & Bibby, 2017) there are three indicators of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). These indicators are as follows:
a) Fear, defined as an emotional state that arises in a person who feels threatened when one is connected or disconnected to an event or experience or conversation with another party.
b) Worry, defined as the feeling that arises when one discovers that others are experiencing pleasant events without them and feels that they have lost the opportunity to meet others.
c) Anxiety, defined as one's response to something unpleasant when one is connected or disconnected to an event, experience, and conversation with another party.

FoMO behavior that is often experienced by adolescents whose status is still a student at the age of 13-21 years can apply based on Behavioristic theory. According to Skinner in (Mustaqim et al., 2024) that behavioristic social behavior shows that every human being moves because he gets stimuli from his environment. Every living being must always be in the process of intersecting with its environment. In that process, living things receive certain stimuli or stimulants that make them act something. Behavioristic theory is a theory that studies human behavior. The behavioral perspective focuses on the role of learning in explaining human behavior and occurs through stimuli based on (stimulus) which gives rise to reactive behavioral relationships (response) mechanistic laws (Arsita, 2021).

There are 3 conditions that make change possible:
a) Change can occur if individuals get help or guidance to make changes.
b) Change tends to occur when valued people treat individuals in new or different ways (creative and not monotonous).
c) If there is strong motivation on the part of the individual to make changes

Application of Behavioristic Theory and Characteristics to Learning
a) Prioritizing Environmental Influences
b) Prioritizing parts
c) Prioritizing the Role of Reaction
d) Prioritizing the mechanism of the formation of learning outcomes through stimulus-response procedures
e) Prioritizing the role of pre-established skills
f) Emphasizes habit formation through practice and repetition
g) The learning outcome achieved is the emergence of the desired behavior

The application of behavioristic theory in overcoming or reducing the phenomenon of "Fear Of Missing Out" (FoMO) in generation Z (adolescence) can be done with various approaches. There is a collaboration between environments as well, including the family environment, the environment of friends, the school environment, and even the social media environment itself.

Guidance from parents is still too heavy so that schools have a hand in instilling values for adolescents (Ermayani & Saputra, 2020). Generation Z's behavior in using social media as a medium for channeling education and activism is an innovative and creative human behavior in the adolescent age period. The intervention effort in this behavior is to change the perspective of social media, which is always considered negative because of the addictive behavior that social media can bring. However, the creativity presented in social media by users is one way that can change this perspective to a positive one (Rahmadiany & Aji, 2024).

Behavioristic theories focus on the influence of the environment and external conditions on a person's behavior, so stimulus and response-based approaches can be used to address FoMO Among them:

Focus on yourself

It is impossible for everyone to keep up all the time. Similarly, it is impossible for someone to be happy all the time because life revolves (Bregman, 2017). We don't need to compare ourselves with others because everyone is not the same in living their lives.

Limiting the use of social media and gadgets

As explained above, one of the causes of FoMO is triggered by other people's posts and updates on social media. Therefore, limiting oneself in using social media can reduce FoMO.

Looking for real connections

We are social creatures who need other people. Therefore, it is important to make social connections with others instead of just doing it through social media. The FoMO feeling will slowly disappear on its own when we prioritize real connections.

Respect yourself

Realizing that there are many good things you have or do and always being grateful for them, can reduce envy and a sense of inadequacy (Mollon, 2018). Try to focus on what you are currently doing instead of looking for proof from others.

Positive Reinforcement

One of the key principles in behavioristic theory is positive reinforcement. In the context of FoMO, adolescents may feel the need to constantly engage in social media or other activities in order to not feel left out. Recognizing and praising them when they make healthy decisions and prioritize their own well-being can be effective positive reinforcement (Crank, 2025).

Modeling

Demonstration or modeling of desirable behaviors can influence teens to adopt those behaviors. For example, if a figure or influencer who is respected by Generation Z demonstrates a balanced attitude in their social media use and personal life, this can set a good example for other teenagers (Vițelar, 2019).

Desensitization

This technique involves gradual exposure to situations or stimuli that trigger FoMO, but in smaller or safer doses. As such, teens can learn to face their fears gradually and with support.

Variable Reinforcement

Changing environmental variables that influence FoMO behavior. For example, reducing exposure to social media or changing the physical environment so that it is more supportive of the desired behavior

Application of Stimulus Control Techniques

Organize the physical and social environment in a way that reduces the likelihood of FoMO. For example, timing social media use or creating an environment that promotes a balance between online and offline

Social Skills Training

Training adolescents in developing healthy communication and social interaction skills can help them reduce their fear of missing out or not belonging to a group. Each individual is unique in how they respond to reinforcement and stimulus. A holistic and individualized approach needs to be applied to address FoMO in Generation Z, especially adolescents, through a behavioristic theory approach that focuses on the influence of the environment and external conditions on a person's behavior. In addition, supporting adolescents in understanding and managing their emotions is also important in helping them deal with social pressures and expectations.

CONCLUSION

FoMO or Fear of Missing Out is the fear of feeling "left behind" for not participating in certain activities and a feeling of anxiety and fear that arises in a person due to missing out on something new, such as news, trends, and other things that trigger feelings of anxiety and then compare our lives with others who look more fun or happy. One way to overcome FoMO in generation Z, especially teenagers, is through a behavioristic theory approach that focuses on the influence of the environment and external conditions on one's behavior and understanding and managing one's own emotions through approaches Focus on yourself, limit the use of social media and gadgets, look for real connections, respect yourself, positive reinforcement, modeling systems, desensitization, variable reinforcement, application of stimulus control techniques, and social skills training.

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