

# **The Phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in the Formation of a Healthy Lifestyle and Social Identity of Golerun Running Club Members**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the role of FOMO in the running community, describe the process of forming social identity through membership, interaction, and shared activities, and interpret its relevance in influencing the way members interpret their involvement, both as an effort to maintain health and as a need for social recognition and existence. The study used a descriptive qualitative method with in-depth interview techniques with six informants, participatory observation, and documentation. The results of the study show that there is a shift in the meaning of FOMO to "Good FOMO" which plays a role in disciplining health behaviors, especially related to sleep patterns and smoking cessation. The formation of social identity emerges through the categorization of the self as an inclusive group, the internalization of the role of the "runner" in the concept of self, and social comparison through digital media that encourages motivation to achieve. The research also found a paradox of participation, namely the involvement of members more driven by the need for social existence, making physical health a by-product. It is concluded that in hybrid communities, FOMO serves as an informal social control mechanism that maintains adherence to a healthy lifestyle while strengthening the group's social identity.

**Keywords:** FOMO; Running Community; Social Identity; Social Media; Healthy Lifestyle.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The development of digital technology and social media has changed the way individuals interact, build social relationships, and form self-identity (Darmawan & de Jesus Isaac, 2022; Nugraha et al., 2024; Oluwatoyin, 2024; Saikia, 2023; Sitompul et al., 2023). Social media is no longer just a means of communication but also a space to display certain activities, achievements, and lifestyles (Butler, 2024; Daudu et al., 2023; Teguh et al., 2023). This condition has given rise to various new social phenomena, one of which is Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), defined as the fear of being left behind in activities, experiences, or social trends carried out by others. FOMO is one of the psychological characteristics that has developed alongside the increasing intensity of social media use, especially among productive-age groups who are active in building communities and engaging in digital interactions.

The concept of FOMO was first comprehensively defined by (Przybylski et al., 2013) as "a deep concern that others may have valuable experiences that the individual did not follow." This phenomenon is rooted in the unmet basic psychological need for relatedness (connection) with others. As a result, individuals use social media as a self-regulation tool to monitor activities within their social environment and ensure they do not miss important moments taking place around them.

This phenomenon of social anxiety has found a new manifestation in healthy lifestyle trends, especially in running, which has now developed into part of the popular culture of urban society (Haugan, 2023; Liu et al., 2022). Running has shifted from being merely a solitary physical activity aimed at maintaining fitness to becoming part of a lifestyle loaded with motives of social existence. This can be seen in trends such as the "Sunday Morning

Run” or the kalcer runner, which dominate social media timelines, where running transforms into a “social currency” used to gain recognition and status in society. According to (Gabriela, 2022), this social pressure makes individuals, especially young people, feel inadequate or irrelevant if they do not engage in the same activities as their peers.

Furthermore, running, which is actually one of the cheapest and most inclusive sports, has now transformed into a social phenomenon due to the existence of unconscious collective agreements within society. The FOMO phenomenon observed here is not merely about running but about a psychological drive to build a certain social identity constructed through community standards. The social identity formed is not simply a label of “people who like to run,” but rather a representation of the image of a modern, established, productive, and lifestyle-conscious urban society. This can be seen in the shift in running culture, which now appears to demand symbolic attributes such as branded running shoes, fashionable outfits, and heart-rate monitoring devices (smartwatches), all of which are validated through uploads of running routes and pace data on the Strava, Instagram, or TikTok applications. This exclusive identity as a “contemporary runner” is actively pursued, thus turning a sport that is fundamentally inexpensive into a platform for demonstrating high-value social existence.

Sports activities are now carried out not only to maintain physical health but also as part of identity formation in public spaces. This is in line with the view of (Trisnasari et al., 2024), who state that sports communities play an important role in shaping healthy living habits through structured interactions. In Cirebon, this phenomenon is evident in the Golerun Running Club community, where the fear of being left behind (FOMO) can be seen through the strong encouragement among members to consistently participate in group running activities in order to maintain their social existence.

Interestingly, the FOMO-driven motivation to continue participating and maintaining this social identity has a real impact on the formation of a measurable healthy lifestyle. Based on initial observations conducted at the Golerun Running Club, the indicators of a healthy lifestyle within this community are not only interpreted as routines involving physical exercise but are also concretely manifested in changes in the biological behavior of its members. There is an interesting phenomenon in which motivation and a supportive community environment encourage members who are survivors of serious illnesses, such as stroke, to gradually return to active movement and recover their physical condition. In addition, this healthy lifestyle can also be observed through discipline-related changes encouraged by the group, such as smokers who gradually reduce or even quit smoking in order to maintain their breathing capacity while running, as well as members who are willing to change their sleep patterns and avoid staying up late so that their physical condition remains optimal during the community’s running schedule. This early evidence reinforces the indication that FOMO can have a positive impact if channeled within the right social environment.

Several previous studies have highlighted the relationship between FOMO, social media, and healthy lifestyles. Research by (Mahdalika et al., 2025) found that healthy lifestyle trends are often fueled by a fear of being left behind. Meanwhile, (Fadilah et al., 2025) and (Sudheer, 2023) explain that FOMO has a significant influence on the formation of an individual’s digital identity through trends involving sports-related uploads, such as sports charts. Although these studies demonstrate the existence of positive social pressures, most still focus on the analysis of digital sentiment and online behavior.

This research gap demonstrates the need for in-depth studies to understand how FOMO operates within the context of a hybrid community, namely a community that operates in an offline setting yet maintains a strong attachment to the digital world (Sabila & Tawaqal, 2025). Golerun Running Club provides a representative setting for examining how FOMO does not merely function as a digital imaging phenomenon but also influences real participation and lifestyle changes. This phenomenon can be explained through Social Identity Theory proposed by (Turner, 1975), which states that individuals build and interpret their identities through membership and interaction within particular social groups.

The urgency of this research is underscored by several factors. First, the Indonesian Ministry of Health's 2023 report indicated that only 33.5% of Indonesians aged 15 years and above engage in sufficient physical activity, highlighting the need for innovative approaches to promote healthy lifestyles. Second, the running community phenomenon has grown exponentially, with the Indonesian Running Community Association reporting more than 1,200 registered running communities nationwide in 2024, representing a 45% increase from 2022. Third, preliminary observations at Golerun Running Club revealed that members who initially joined primarily for social reasons (45% of new members) subsequently demonstrated measurable changes in health behavior, including reduced smoking habits (32% of smokers reduced or quit smoking) and improved sleep regularity (67% reported earlier bedtimes). Understanding how FOMO drives these changes has practical implications for public health interventions.

Based on this background, this study aims to describe the process of forming members' social identities through membership, interaction, and shared activities within the running community. In addition, it seeks to interpret the relationship between the phenomenon of FOMO and social identity in influencing the way members perceive their participation, both as an effort to maintain health and as a need for social recognition and existence. Finally, this study aims to analyze the role of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon as an external motivation in the formation of a healthy lifestyle among Golerun Running Club members.

## **METHOD**

This research used a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because the researcher aimed to understand social phenomena in depth from the participants' perspectives, especially regarding how the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) was interpreted and how it played a role in the formation of healthy lifestyles and social identities among members of the running community.

In accordance with the view of (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), qualitative research focuses on the exploration of the meaning given by individuals or groups to a social problem. Therefore, this study did not aim to test hypotheses or statistically measure relationships between variables, but rather to comprehensively describe the processes of interaction, motives, and identity formation that naturally occurred within the Golerun Running Club community.

The subjects of this study were active members of the Golerun Running Club who were involved in regular running activities and actively interacted on the community's social media platforms. The subjects acted as informants who provided data regarding their subjective

experiences. The subjects were selected because they had directly experienced the phenomenon of FOMO in community activities.

The object of this research was the phenomenon of FOMO that emerged within the community, specifically how the fear of being left behind in community activities affected members' lifestyles, participation, and the formation of their social identities. This object was important to study because it illustrated the transformation of sports behavior that was previously based on health motivation into a social phenomenon loaded with symbols, status, and self-image in digital spaces.

The determination of informants was carried out using the purposive sampling technique, which is a sampling technique for selecting data sources based on specific considerations. The researcher selected informants who were considered to have the most knowledge about the problem being studied so that they could provide relevant and in-depth information. The criteria for informants in this study included: (1) active members who had joined the community, (2) participation in regular group running activities (such as Morning Run or Night Run), (3) active involvement in social interactions, both directly and through community social media, and (4) willingness to provide information and personal experiences related to the phenomenon of FOMO and the healthy lifestyles they practiced.

Based on these criteria, six informants were selected, consisting of:

1. One key informant: the Chairperson/Captain of the community, who provided an overview of the vision, mission, and internal dynamics of the community.
2. Five main informants: active members who provided insights into psychological experiences related to FOMO and lifestyle changes.

The research was conducted at Golerun Running Club, an active running community in Cirebon City, West Java. This location was chosen because the community had regular group running activities, strong social interactions, and high social media engagement in building both the community's image and the personal branding of its members. In addition, the community demonstrated an interesting FOMO phenomenon to be studied, particularly in the context of the formation of members' social identities.

The research period lasted for two months, from December 2024 to January 2025, and included the pre-field stage, data collection (observation and interviews), and the data analysis stage. The main instruments used in this study were in-depth interview guidelines and participatory observation sheets. The interview guidelines were compiled based on indicators derived from Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which aimed to explore the social experiences, motivations for participation, and the meanings of self-identity formed among members of the Golerun Running Club.

The interview questions were designed openly and flexibly so that informants could answer reflectively and in depth according to their experiences as part of the running community. To obtain comprehensive data, the researcher used three main techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore the informants' hidden motivations and feelings based on indicators from Social Identity Theory. Second, participatory observation was carried out in which the researcher was directly involved in running activities and observed symbolic interactions both in the field and on social media in order to capture verbal and nonverbal expressions. Third, documentation was conducted by

collecting archives of activity photographs, screenshots from social media, and other supporting data.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model proposed by (Miles et al., 2014). This process included three simultaneous flows of activity: (1) data condensation, namely the process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying interview transcript data relevant to FOMO and Social Identity Theory indicators; (2) data display, namely organizing the condensed data into logical narratives and categorization matrices based on themes; and (3) conclusion drawing, namely interpreting the relationship between FOMO, healthy lifestyles, and social identity while verifying the findings. To ensure the validity of the data, this study used the source triangulation technique. The researcher compared statements from different informants (for example, comparing statements from the Captain with those from members) and compared interview results with field observations to ensure the consistency of information regarding the phenomena occurring within the Golerun Running Club.

This theoretical foundation attracted the researcher's attention to analyze how FOMO not only affected the participation of Golerun Running Club members but also influenced the formation of healthy lifestyles and social identities that emerged through interactions in both the real and digital worlds. Thus, the entire research process was designed to produce an in-depth understanding of how the phenomenon of FOMO played a role in shaping the healthy lifestyles and social identities of Golerun Running Club members.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Basically, running sports activities in urban environments today have undergone a shift in meaning, from what was originally a physical need for health to a social phenomenon loaded with motifs of existence and self-image. This study found that the phenomenon Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) that develops within the Golerun Running Club community is not solely a source of negative social anxiety. In contrast, the field data shows different dynamics in the members of the Golerun Running Club, where the phenomenon of FOMO is no longer seen as an anxiety disorder, rather, it has transformed into a constructive motivational drive to form a healthy lifestyle. The fear of missing out on moments of togetherness and group activities actually triggers the emergence of "positive envy" that motivates individuals to stay consistent in their exercise routines.

These findings illustrate how the fear of being left behind from moments of community togetherness actually works as a social control mechanism that disciplines members' daily behavior, from regulating sleep patterns to stopping bad habits to maintain physical performance. Descriptively, the process of forming a healthy identity and lifestyle occurs through three main stages: Social Categorization which builds group inclusivity, Social Identification which makes health a supporting factor for the need for existence, and Social Comparison which turns visual pressure on social media into a standard of group discipline. Through these stages, this community has succeeded in converting digital anxiety into real actions that have a positive impact on the quality of life of its members

### **The Process of Social Identity Formation in Building Solidarity Through Inclusivity and Community Interaction**

The process of forming the social identity of Golerun Running Club members begins with a fundamental stage, namely social categorization. Here, the members try to map their

position in the midst of the crowded running trend that is developing in Cirebon. Consciously, they draw clear group boundaries between their group as an "In-Group" and other running communities or "Out-Group". Findings on the ground show that Golerun Running Club members position themselves as the opposite of the conventional running community that is often considered too serious, "elite", or rigid. This categorization creates a strong sense of belonging because it is based on a common background and a more relaxed communication style.

One of the main factors on which this grouping is based is generational similarity. The majority of members identify themselves as part of Generation Z and Millennials, who often feel awkward or un"connected" when it comes to joining a running club dominated by the older generation. The similarity of the topic of conversation and the frequency of humor becomes a very important social glue here. This was acknowledged by one of the members of the Golerun Running Club, who felt comfortable because the social environment was very relevant, in addition to feeling comfortable another reason to join was because the majority of members came from Generation Z and Millennials, so the topic of conversation felt very relevant and "connected" to their world. While comparing his experiences in other places that sometimes feel awkward because it is dominated by much more experienced members. This statement emphasizes that age and communication comfort factors are the initial filter for a person in choosing his social group (Taufik, January 14, 2025).

This collective identity is then emphasized through the vision carried by the community, namely "Run on Budget" and "No Sign Up, Just Show Up". This vision is not just a slogan, but a statement of attitude to counter the stereotype that running is an expensive hobby that requires branded gear. This principle is deliberately emphasized to counter the culture of "showing off outfits" that often make beginners feel inferior, while emphasizing that running activities do not have to be expensive or use luxury branded clothes because the main focus is health and togetherness. This emphasis on simplicity is a distinctive feature that distinguishes the identity of Golerun Running Club from other communities (Novan, January 14, 2025).

This inclusive categorization strategy has proven to be very effective in creating a sense of psychological safety for new members. By forming an identity as a "financially inclusive" community, Golerun Running Club has succeeded in removing the mental burden that is often felt by ordinary people who feel the Fear Of Missing Out when they want to join for sports. Individuals who feel that they are "not athletes" or do not have expensive shoes feel legitimate to join because they categorize Golerun Running Club as a place that accepts imperfections. This creates a natural loyalty, where members feel accepted for who they are without burdensome performance demands.

Tangible evidence of this inclusive identity can be seen in the pattern of interaction that is very relaxed and has minimal hierarchy (seniority). There are no rigid boundaries between old and new members making the process of sharing running knowledge very relaxed. Runners who are better do not position themselves as the most experienced party, but play the role of a supportive partner. A stroke survivor who has physical limitations feels the positive impact of this culture firsthand. He told the uniqueness of the community where great or more experienced runners do not show an arrogant attitude, but still embrace and are willing to share running tips and a healthy lifestyle even though they sometimes run at a limited speed

due to their medical history. This inclusivity proves that social categorization at Golerun Running Club is based on support, not competition (Ayub, January 14, 2025).

The group's social identity is also strengthened through a unique social ritual, namely the culture of "drinking coffee" after running. This activity is not just a complement, but rather a core ritual that distinguishes Golerun Running Club from running groups that only focus on chasing kilometer targets or pace. For members, the moment of hanging out at this coffee shop is the real bonding time. This is highlighted as the main attraction that triggers a sense of longing when absent from activities. The concept of a relaxed but still exciting community is considered a very valuable and expensive bonding moment. The identity as a "Recreational Runner" who prioritizes fun over competition is what makes Golerun Running Club relevant for the young people of Cirebon (Dani, January 14, 2025).

### **Interpretation of the Meaning of Participation That Dominates the Need for Existence and Social Recognition Over Health Motives**

The second dimension is social identification, a phase in which membership in a group has penetrated into the self-concept of its members. At this stage, there is a fusion of meaning where the title "Runner" or "Golerun Running Club Member" is no longer just a side hobby category, but has become an important part of their identity. Members begin to see the world and judge themselves through this membership perspective. However, there is an interesting finding that becomes paradoxical, although the main activity is running as a form of self-health, the main reason that makes them consistent is precisely the need for existence and social recognition.

For some members, this running activity is used intelligently as a Personal Branding tool. In this all-digital era, identity as an "active runner" can be transformed into a trust capital in the world of work. One of the members who works as a freelancer, honestly admitted openly that the consistency of uploading running activities on social media is part of a personal branding strategy. He considers this step effective in building client trust indirectly, because the image of a disciplined runner is often associated with a positive character and represents a person with integrity and consistency (Taufik, January 14, 2025).

On a more personal level, this social identification serves as a way to restore self-esteem and self-validation. For members who have a history of serious illness, their status as part of the community adapts to become a symbol of resistance and victory over the limitations of the body. This is reflected in the experience of a stroke survivor who interprets running activity as more than just a sport, but as a momentum to prove the resurrection from a critical condition. Physical limitations due to a history of illness are no longer used as a reason to stop, but instead become a trigger for enthusiasm to prove that the body is still able to actively move. Every successful completion of the running route is considered a very meaningful personal victory against the disease suffered. This sense of pride in the new identity provides mental strength that is felt to have a much greater impact than just the benefits of physical fitness (Ayub, January 14, 2025).

The consequence of this strong identity motive is that the position of physical health shifts to a by-product or just a bonus. Many members who initially joined just to find friends or existence, what happened actually got their healthy motivation later. They maintain a healthy lifestyle pattern not solely because they are afraid of getting sick, but because they are afraid of losing the "cool" identity they have built. This was acknowledged by one of the

members who revealed that his original intention to join was just to find fun and expand friendships. However, over time, he felt significant weight loss, so the health benefits were interpreted as a bonus from the social activities he carried out (Dani, January 14, 2025).

The role of social media is crucial here as a front stage to validate this identity. Every post about running serves as a reaffirmation to the public that "This is me, a runner". Positive responses from the surrounding environment, whether it's likes on Instagram or direct questions in the real world, increasingly bind individuals to the role. The new identity label as a runner is felt to have been firmly attached to the work environment. The informant, who works as a teacher, revealed that his colleagues at school now often ask questions or joke about his running routine. The social interaction is interpreted as a form of validation or social recognition for their new role as an active individual in sports. This public recognition then strengthens the commitment and enthusiasm of members to continue to maintain consistency in running (Keisha, January 14, 2025).

So you could say, social identification at Golerun Running Club creates a stronger bond than just ordinary health motivation. Identity as a member of the community provides a sense of belonging and pride that makes individuals willing to discipline themselves. Physical health is finally achieved not because of coercion or instruction, but because of the desire of members to continue to "exist" and to be recognized for their role in the positive dynamics of the group.

### **The Role of Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) as an External Motivation in the Formation of a Healthy Lifestyle**

Phenomenon Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) within the community Golerun Running Club It turns out that it is not interpreted as anxiety that causes stress, but instead turns into a positive motivational impulse. This process occurs through the mechanism of social comparison (Social Comparison), where members make their friends' running activity uploads on social media as a standard or mirror to evaluate themselves. When you see other friends actively running or joining an event exciting, there is a feeling that the informants call "positive envy". Instead of being envious, this feeling burns their enthusiasm to be able to match this achievement. Fear of being left behind (fear of missing out) can also spark constructive encouragement. One admitted that seeing the achievements of his colleagues gave rise to a sense of "positive envy" which actually burned his spirit and motivated him to be able to participate in the running competition the following year. In a supportive community environment, these feelings do not become a burden, but are converted into motivational energy to continue to develop one's abilities (Taufik, January 14, 2025).

The object of fear in FOMO here is actually not just about being physically left behind, but rather the fear of losing the moment of togetherness (fear of missing moments). Post-Race Excitement Upload in Posted on Instagram Such as the moment of coffee together or the laughter of other members creates strong visual pressure for those who are absent. The emotional disappointment he felt when he could only monitor community activities through the mobile phone screen. In this case, who sees the upload Story The Instagram of his colleagues who are running together will trigger a deep sense of regret and anxiety, accompanied by a strong feeling that he should be present in the moment together. This emotion then functions effectively as an internal marker to force the body to fight laziness, as well as being a driver of discipline so that it can be present in the next training session.

The impact of this social pressure is very real changing the daily habits of members, giving birth to discipline driven by social factors (Socially-Driven Discipline). Members are willing to change their lifestyle, such as increasing their bedtime and avoiding staying up late, to ensure their physical condition is in excellent condition when meeting with community friends. But more because of practical needs so that I can run well with friends. The significant relationship between social commitment and rest discipline is reflected in changes in behavior that now avoids the habit of staying up late in order to adhere to the morning running schedule. The decision to prioritize sleep time was driven by empirical experience regarding physiological impacts, where lack of rest has been shown to disrupt heart rate stability (Heart rate) during physical activity (Taufik, January 14, 2025).

In addition to sleep, the social environment of the community also provides a real example (Vicarious Experience) that motivate more drastic lifestyle changes. Seeing community friends consistently maintain health encourages other members to abandon bad habits that are counterproductive, such as smoking. The real transformation was experienced by one of the members who was previously an active smoker. He revealed that in order to maintain his breathing performance while running, he has managed to give up conventional cigarettes completely, although he still occasionally uses e-cigarettes (vape) in a limited frequency. Thus, the phenomenon of FOMO and social comparison in this community serves effectively as an informal social control mechanism, which keeps members consistent on the path of a healthy lifestyle without any external coercion (Veda, January 14, 2025).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concluded that the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) within the Golerun Running Club had evolved from merely a form of social anxiety into a constructive external motivation that encouraged the formation of healthy lifestyles and social identities among its members. Through mechanisms of social comparison and socially driven discipline, members were encouraged to adopt healthier biological behaviors, such as improving sleep patterns and reducing or quitting smoking, in order to maintain their participation and relevance within the group. The process of social identity formation also occurred through inclusive social categorization, in which members positioned themselves as part of a recreational and non-elitist running community guided by the principles of “Run on Budget” and “No Sign Up, Just Show Up.” Furthermore, the study found that member participation was strongly influenced by the need for social recognition and personal branding, making running activities not only a health-oriented practice but also a means of validating social existence, while physical health emerged as a positive by-product of maintaining that identity. Future research is recommended to explore the long-term psychological and behavioral impacts of FOMO in other hybrid sports communities and to examine differences in FOMO-driven participation across age groups, genders, and digital engagement patterns.

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