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# **Fear of Missing Out and the Dynamics of Student Identity: An Intercultural Communication Perspective in the Digital Age (Study at Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of Universitas Tanjungpura Pontianak)**

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**Abstract.** The objective of this study is to analyze the impact of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon on the formation and negotiation of student identities at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP) Universitas Tanjungpura (Untan) Pontianak. This research aims to examine how FOMO influences students' cultural identity representation in cross-cultural digital interactions, specifically in social media platforms. Additionally, it seeks to explore the extent to which social media strengthens or weakens students' awareness of their own and others' cultural identities, and to identify the role of digital peer pressure in shaping students' self-presentation behaviors. Lastly, the study will investigate the communication strategies employed by FISIP Untan students to manage FOMO pressures while preserving their authentic cultural identities in intercultural digital spaces. This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach using a multicultural case study method. The participants include students from diverse ethnic backgrounds within FISIP Untan Pontianak. Data were analyzed thematically and triangulated for validity. Based on this framework, the study identifies three key research questions: (1) How does the experience of FOMO influence the formation and negotiation of student identity in cross-cultural digital interactions? (2) To what extent does social media strengthen or weaken students' awareness of their own and others' cultural identities in the context of FOMO? (3) What role does digital peer pressure play in shaping cross-cultural students' self-representation behavior in the FOMO era? The findings reveal three major conclusions: First, FOMO significantly affects the formation and negotiation of student identity within intercultural digital spaces. Second, social media plays a dual role - both reinforcing and undermining students' cultural identity awareness. Third, digital peer pressure serves as a central force shaping students' self-representation in intercultural contexts during the FOMO era. Overall, FOMO and digital peer pressure generate a complex space where cross-cultural students dynamically negotiate their identities. Social media thus becomes both a platform and a challenge in balancing the pursuit of social recognition with the preservation of authentic cultural identity. Key insights include: (1) FOMO as a trigger for cultural identity negotiation; (2) cultural identity becoming increasingly performative in digital spaces; (3) digital peer pressure weakening attachment to local culture; (4) social media as a site of cultural negotiation rather than mere expression; and (5) students demonstrating adaptability, yet in need of critical intercultural awareness.

**Keywords.** Fear of Missing Out, Student Identity, Intercultural Communication, Digital Age

### **A. Introduction**

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed how individuals communicate, establish social relationships, and construct as well as negotiate their identities. For students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP) of Universitas Tanjungpura (Untan) Pontianak, social media has become a primary space for interaction, self-expression, and social validation. This transformation, however, is not without pressure. Social expectations, algorithmic influence, and the dynamics of online communities have created a communication landscape that is highly competitive and laden with existential demands. One prominent psychosocial phenomenon arising from this context is Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) - the anxiety of being left behind from experiences or information encountered by others. As Przybylski et al. (2013) highlight, FOMO is closely associated with the intensity of social media use and the psychological need for social connectedness. University students, who are generally in the developmental stage of identity formation and social exploration, are particularly vulnerable to FOMO-induced pressures. This anxiety impacts not only the time and energy invested in digital activities but also the consistency and authenticity of their cultural identities, particularly in intercultural contexts. In an era of higher education globalization and increasingly diverse campus communities, students regularly engage with individuals from various cultural backgrounds. Within such intercultural digital communication, students often face a dilemma: whether to maintain their own cultural identity or to conform to the prevailing norms of culturally diverse online groups. This reflects a dynamic process of identity negotiation—fluid, situational, and adaptive rather than fixed. To examine this phenomenon, this study draws upon Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner), which posits that individuals define themselves through their group affiliations, and that identity is subject to change in response to evolving social interactions. Additionally, Intercultural Communication Theory (Edward T. Hall and Milton J. Bennett) emphasizes that successful intercultural communication requires sensitivity to differing cultural values, norms, and symbols. In practice, students experiencing FOMO within intercultural digital spaces often encounter digital peer pressure, which shapes the way they communicate and represent themselves online. This highlights the urgency of studying how students from diverse cultural backgrounds manage FOMO, employ intercultural communication strategies, and negotiate their identities in digital environments. Based on a comprehensive literature review and online search, existing research has separately addressed FOMO among students, cultural identity on social media, and intercultural adaptation in the digital era. However, no study to date has integrated these three domains - FOMO, social identity, and intercultural communication (Hall & Bennett) - in a focused investigation of FISIP Untan students. This research thus presents a highly relevant and original contribution by synthesizing FOMO theory, Henry Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, and Hall - Bennett's Intercultural Communication Theory to explore the cultural identity dynamics of students in a cross-cultural digital era. This study holds both academic and social relevance, bridging digital psychology, intercultural communication, and identity formation in the context of today's youth. Based on this rationale, the study addresses the following three research questions: 1) How does the experience of FOMO influence the formation and negotiation of student identity in cross-cultural digital interactions? 2) To what extent does social media strengthen or weaken students' awareness of their own and other cultural identities in the context of FOMO? 3) What role does digital peer pressure play in shaping intercultural student self-representation in the FOMO era?

## **B. Method**

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing a multicultural case study method to explore how students from various cultural backgrounds at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP) Universitas Tanjungpura (Untan) Pontianak experience and navigate their identities in the context of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon. The aim is to gain a comprehensive understanding of how FOMO influences their participation in digital spaces, particularly in cross-cultural interactions. The case study approach was chosen for its ability to provide detailed, context-specific insights into the behaviors, attitudes, and strategies of students as they engage with digital social dynamics that are shaped by FOMO and intercultural communication pressures.

The theoretical framework for this study integrates three key theories. Intercultural Communication Theory, particularly the models proposed by Edward T. Hall and Milton J. Bennett, offers a lens through which the cultural differences in communication strategies can be examined. This theory will help interpret how students from diverse cultural backgrounds adjust their communication styles in response to digital peer pressure and the social dynamics induced by FOMO. Additionally, FOMO Theory by Przybylski et al. (2013) provides psychological insights into the anxiety stemming from perceived social exclusion, and how this impacts students' online interactions. Finally, Social Identity Theory by Tajfel & Turner (1979) will be applied to understand how students form and negotiate their cultural identities in digital spaces, navigating between in-groups and out-groups in the process of adapting to or resisting external cultural influences.

Data were collected through a combination of in-depth interviews, online observation (netnography), and digital content analysis. The interviews will delve into the personal experiences of students regarding FOMO, cultural identity, and the negotiation of these identities within intercultural digital interactions. Online observation will involve analyzing students' digital behavior on platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram, while content analysis will examine how students represent and adjust their cultural identities in social media content. Thematic analysis will be used to identify key patterns and themes across the data, while data triangulation will integrate insights from interviews, observations, and content analysis to enhance the validity and robustness of the findings. The research will involve 8 to 15 students, selected from diverse local and international backgrounds, ensuring that the sample represents a broad spectrum of cultural perspectives and digital engagement.

## **C. Result and discussion**

### **Research result**

#### **1. The Influence of FOMO on the Construction and Negotiation of Student Cultural Identity in Digital Intercultural Interactions**

This study explored how Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) influences the formation and negotiation of cultural identity among university students in digital intercultural communication spaces. The findings are categorized into three thematic sub-sections: 1) How students identify and represent their cultural identity in digital intercultural interactions over the course of an academic semester; 2) The forms of pressure or influence exerted by FOMO in students' efforts to maintain or adjust their cultural identity in digital communication environments; 3) The communication strategies students employ to balance the need for social connectivity due to FOMO with efforts to maintain the integrity of their cultural identity.

***Cultural Identity Representation in Intercultural Digital Interaction***

**Table 1.** Students of FISIP Untan

No	Name	Study Program	Batch	Origin	Ethnicity
1	Krisvino Nuardi	Political Science	2023	Sekadau	Dayak Kerabat
2	Muhammad Ghufron	Social Development	2022	Singkawang	Melayu Singkawang
3	Lisa	Social Development	2022	Kubu Raya	Melayu Kubu Raya
4	Andri	Social Development	2022	Sambas	Sambas
5	Rudi Hartono	Political Science	2023	Landak	Dayak Kanayan't
6	Intana	Public Administration	2023	Sambas	Melayu
7	Resti Patria Yuniar	Public Administration	2023	Sintang	East Java
8	Fifi Ramanda Salsya	Public Administration	2023	Sanggau	Melayu
9	Dekhri Priyantoro	Public Administration	2023	Yogyakarta	Jawa Jogja
10	Firdha Agustina	Archiving	2023	West Kalimantan	Central Java
11	Devi Natalia Subketi	Sociology	2023	Riau Island, Natuna Regency	Central Java
12	Astrid Diva Amanda Runtu	Public Administration	2023	Ketapang	Melayu
13	Virzeta Ikrara Porogoi	Communication Science	2023	Bali	Bali
14	Amelia	Communication Science	2023	Pontianak	Melayu Pontianak
15	Lusanta Kailila Gowtama	Communication Science	2023	Pontianak	Tionghoa

*Source: Data processed by the researcher, 2025*

The majority of students from FISIP UNTAN demonstrated a conscious and explicit identification with their cultural backgrounds. This was observable through: a) Self-disclosure of ethnic origin, regional background, and local language in social media bios and digital introductions; b) Sharing of culturally infused content - such as traditional music, attire, and cuisine - on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp Status; c) Strategic language blending (Indonesian, local dialects such as Dayak, Malay, or Bugis, and digital slang) to signal cultural belonging.

However, in cross-cultural interactions—such as online student exchanges, webinars, or intercultural campus forums—students often made adjustments: a) Shifting to more neutral and socially acceptable communication styles; b) Minimizing visible expressions of cultural identity to avoid being perceived as “different” or “foreign”; c) Altering digital identity markers, such as replacing local names with English aliases to appeal to broader audiences.

These findings highlight the fluid and context-sensitive nature of students’ cultural identity representation. Students appear acutely aware of their audience and often negotiate their self-presentation to enhance social connectivity.

***Forms of FOMO-Driven Pressure on Cultural Identity***

Interview data revealed that FOMO manifests in several ways: a) Anxiety about appearing inactive in campus digital communities or disengaged from national/international popular culture; b) Pressure to produce trend-aligned content, even when misaligned with

personal or cultural values (e.g., participating in viral TikTok challenges that contradict local norms); c) Fear of missing out on intercultural discussions or information, prompting students to stay online and engage despite discomfort or cultural dissonance.

Examples:

- A Dayak student reported limiting the sharing of cultural content due to perceptions of it being “uninteresting” to peers from outside Kalimantan.
- A Bugis student expressed the need to adopt “Jaksel” (Jakarta Selatan) language styles to feel accepted in national student groups.

FOMO functions not only as an information-based anxiety but as a social conformity pressure, compelling students to normalize their identity expressions. This creates an internal tension between authenticity and acceptance in intercultural digital communities.

### ***Communication Strategies for Balancing FOMO and Cultural Identity***

Students employed three dominant strategies to navigate the complexities of digital social pressures while maintaining their cultural identities. The first strategy, **Cultural Compromise**, involved blending local and popular elements, such as performing traditional dances to modern music. Additionally, students used local language in their captions, often complemented by global hashtags or translations to ensure broader appeal. The second strategy, **Selective Posting**, was characterized by sharing cultural content in more private digital spaces like WhatsApp or Instagram’s Close Friends feature. This strategy also involved avoiding public cultural debates to minimize the risk of misinterpretation by a wider audience. The final strategy, **Cultural Framing**, saw students educating their audiences by presenting inclusive cultural narratives, such as explaining the significance of a particular ritual with phrases like, “In my culture, this ritual means...”. They also wrapped traditional content in popular digital storytelling formats to make it more relatable and engaging.

These strategies highlight the students' ability to adapt to digital social pressures while safeguarding their cultural integrity. Rather than fully self-censoring, they skillfully managed their context and audience, balancing authenticity with the need for digital connectivity.

## **2. How Social Media Shapes Cultural Awareness Under FOMO**

This section explores how social media either strengthens or weakens students' cultural awareness in the context of FOMO, across three dimensions: 1) Awareness of one's own and others' cultural identities; 2) How FOMO anxiety shapes content choices and participation in cultural discourse; 3) The impact of FOMO on social connectedness and emotional ties with one's cultural community.

### ***Social Media and Cultural Awareness: Strengthening or Weakening?***

Social media has a dual impact on students' cultural awareness, both strengthening and weakening it depending on the context. On one hand, social media strengthens cultural awareness when students engage with culturally focused communities. For example, accounts that highlight regional content, such as @kalbarinframe, offer students a platform to connect with and celebrate their local cultures. However, this sense of cultural pride diminishes under the pressure of FOMO. Students tend to prioritize global or popular trends, which often overshadow their local cultural expressions.

A Dayak student, for instance, shared their pride when Kalimantan cultural content went viral, yet confessed that they preferred posting K-pop dance videos instead. This choice stemmed from a fear of appearing outdated or irrelevant compared to the global trends dominating social media. FOMO drives students to conform to what is trending, selecting

content that aligns with popular global interests, often at the expense of showcasing their unique cultural heritage.

This analysis reveals that FOMO encourages a homogenization of content, dampening the motivation to highlight local cultures. However, in more culturally grounded digital communities, social media serves as a powerful tool for cultural affirmation. Ultimately, social media's role in cultural awareness is ambivalent: it can empower students to celebrate their heritage, but it can also erode it, depending on whether their social media use is driven by intentional engagement with cultural pride or by the pressure to fit in with global trends.

### ***FOMO and Cultural Content Selection***

Students often find themselves caught in a dilemma between expressing their cultural authenticity and seeking social acceptability on digital platforms. The pressure of FOMO drives them to selectively post content that is deemed "safe" or aligns with popular cultural trends. In this context, FOMO influences students to avoid showcasing minority cultural expressions, instead favoring the dominant cultural narratives that dominate social media, such as Korean pop culture. Local perspectives are often neglected, as students fear being judged for sharing unfamiliar or niche cultural content that may not resonate with a wider audience.

FOMO acts as an internal filter, prompting students to prioritize content that has been socially validated over more meaningful or genuine cultural expressions. This leads to a sanitized or diluted version of their cultural identity, shaped less by their personal or cultural values and more by the desire for online approval. Instead of presenting their authentic selves, students strategically curate their cultural expressions to ensure they are accepted and appreciated within the digital space.

In conclusion, cultural expression on social media becomes a carefully crafted performance, influenced more by audience expectations and approval than by the students' own values or cultural significance. The fear of judgment and the pressure to conform to popular trends dictate how students choose to represent their cultural identity online.

### ***FOMO and Students' Social Bonds with Cultural Communities***

Students with high levels of FOMO tend to disengage from their local cultural communities online, redirecting their social interactions toward fast-paced, global digital spaces. The appeal of these global communities, with their ever-changing trends and widespread recognition, often draws students away from their cultural roots. As a result, students experience a shift in their social dynamics, where interactions with local cultural groups diminish in favor of more mainstream digital communities that promise broader social validation.

This shift has significant social and emotional impacts. Students find themselves developing dual digital identities - one for public, global engagement and another for private, more culturally rooted affiliations. Over time, this leads to feelings of inauthenticity, as students juggle these contrasting personas. Despite this inner conflict, many continue these behaviors due to a deep fear of social isolation, prioritizing the need for social recognition over cultural continuity.

FOMO thus functions as a digital social compass, steering students away from the familiarity of their local affiliations and towards the allure of global spaces that are perceived as more socially "profitable." The anxiety induced by FOMO redirects their social energy, often at the cost of genuine cultural connections and emotional ties to their heritage. In conclusion, while FOMO drives students toward a broader, more global social network, it comes at a significant emotional price, weakening their attachment to their own cultural identity.

### 3. The Role of Digital Peer Pressure in Shaping Intercultural Student Behavior in the Era of FOMO

#### *Student Awareness of Digital Peer Pressure*

Students from various cultural backgrounds recognized the pressure to remain visible, responsive, and socially relevant in digital environments such as class groups, campus communities, and social media. This pressure was felt across different cultural groups, each experiencing it in unique ways. For instance, Dayak and Malay students often felt underrepresented in the trending media, as their cultural expressions were less visible in mainstream content. On the other hand, Javanese and Chinese-Indonesian students adapted more easily to these digital spaces but still experienced pressure to engage with the mainstream trends in order to fit in. Bugis and non-Kalimantan students, on the other hand, adapted quickly to dominant digital cultures, as doing so was seen as essential for social inclusion and recognition within the global online community.

The pressure manifested in several forms. Students frequently experienced anxiety over delayed responses, worrying that their lack of immediate engagement would negatively impact their social standing. There were also concerns over maintaining sufficient levels of engagement - students felt that they needed to be constantly active in online interactions to remain socially relevant. In addition, the fear of missing out on critical social information was a significant source of stress, as students felt they had to stay constantly connected to avoid being left behind or excluded from important conversations and trends.

#### *Cultural Responses to Digital Peer Pressure*

**Table 2.** Thematic Analysis – FOMO Responses by Cultural Background

Cultural Group	FOMO Awareness	Response Strategy	Notable Patterns
Dayak	High – feel underrepresented	Prefer private cultural spaces	Preserve authenticity in select forums
Malay	Moderate – selective adjustment	Share culture during special moments	Sensitive to digital norms
Bugis	High – seek integration	Adopt universal communication styles	Cultural identity is increasingly blurred
Chinese-Indonesian	Low to moderate	Expressive and trend-driven	Highly adaptable digitally
Javanese	Moderate – conscious of norms	Blend tradition with trend	Stable digital literacy
Non-Kalimantan migrants	High – fear exclusion	Adjust language and expression to dominant context	Active globally, less engaged locally

*Source: Data processed by the researcher, 2025*

The analysis of these table reveals that a) adaptation levels correlate with cultural digital visibility; b) Students from underrepresented cultures tend to compartmentalize their identity; c) Dominant/adaptive groups integrate cultural identity more fluidly into digital interactions.

#### *Intercultural Student Strategies for Managing FOMO and Cultural Identity*

**Table 3.** Intercultural Communication Strategies

Strategy Name	Description	Primary Goal	Example
Digital Code-Switching	Adapting language, emojis, topics	Social inclusion	Bugis student uses "Jaksel" style in Zoom

Cultural Framing	Narrating culture in universal terms	Preserve values, remain relatable	Dayak student explains rituals on TikTok
Dual Persona	Separate accounts for cultural/private vs. public/trendy	Privacy for cultural identity	Malay student uses Close Friends for cultural posts
Peer Alignment	Adjusting views and comments to dominant group	Harmonize group interaction	Chinese-Indonesian student joins K-pop talks
Cultural Shielding	Avoiding culturally sensitive topics	Value preservation	Javanese student skips dance trends deemed vulgar
Recontextualization	Merging local culture with global trends	Creative visibility	Minang student remixes local music into Reels

*Source: Data processed by the researcher, 2025*

**Table 4. Impacts of Strategy Use**

Aspect	Positive Impact	Negative Impact
Social Engagement	Maintains digital visibility	Risk of over-conformity
Cultural Expression	Creative display of heritage	Cultural identity may be diluted
Psychosocial Health	Strategic anxiety reduction	Emergence of dual identities
Intercultural Literacy	Increased cultural awareness	Hesitance in authentic expression persists

*Source: Data processed by the researcher, 2025*

These strategies reflect students' digital cultural agency - the ability to construct identity under social pressure while negotiating authenticity and relevance. Students are not passive subjects of digital culture but active agents navigating a complex terrain of cultural integrity and FOMO-driven connectivity

## Discussion

### 1. How the experience of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) influences the formation and negotiation of university students' cultural identities within digital intercultural interactions

This chapter delves deeper into how the experience of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) influences the formation and negotiation of university students' cultural identities within digital intercultural interactions. The discussion is organized around three key themes: 1) How students identify and represent their cultural identities in cross-cultural digital interactions over the course of an academic semester; 2) The forms of pressure or influence exerted by FOMO on students' efforts to maintain or adapt their cultural identities within intercultural digital communication environments; 3) The communication strategies students employ to balance the social demands arising from FOMO with the imperative to preserve the integrity of their cultural identities in intercultural digital exchanges.

#### *Students' Identification and Representation of Cultural Identity in Cross-Cultural Digital Interactions Over One Academic Semester*

Within the continuously evolving digital ecosystem, university students emerge as key agents in cross-cultural online communication. These digital interaction spaces provide opportunities to introduce and celebrate diverse cultural identities. Concurrently, a new form of social pressure arises in the shape of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)—a psychological anxiety that compels individuals to feel socially connected and relevant.

Przybylski et al. (2013) define FOMO as: "A pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent."

FOMO not only influences digital social decision-making but also imposes pressures on identity management, including cultural identity.

FOMO Dimensions According to Przybylski et al. (2013): 1) The need for constant social connection; 2) Anxiety about missing shared experiences; 3) Continuous social comparison; 4) The drive to follow popular trends as a form of self-validation.

When applied to cultural identity, FOMO pressures affect students by a) Identifying their cultural identity within digital public spaces; b) Representing that culture within the context of multicultural online interactions.

#### ***a) Identifying Cultural Identity in Digital Spaces***

Students from various cultural backgrounds are increasingly aware of the cultural values that define their identities, especially when engaging with cultural-themed content and discussions online. Whether it's sharing local cuisine, traditional music, or regional languages, these activities allow students to express and celebrate their cultural heritage in the digital space. Moreover, students often compare their own cultural expressions to those that dominate social media platforms, such as Korean pop culture, Western cultural norms, or the mainstream national culture. This comparison not only helps them understand their own cultural positioning but also exposes them to the global digital landscape.

However, the pressure of FOMO complicates this process of cultural identity formation. As students feel the pressure to stay relevant and connected, they begin to frame their cultural identities through the lens of digital trends rather than rooted in authentic cultural experiences. For example, Dayak students expressed feeling that their cultural identity was "digitally underrepresented," as it struggled to gain visibility on social media in comparison to more mainstream content. This sense of underrepresentation makes it harder for students to assert their cultural identity in the digital realm, as they feel compelled to adopt more widely recognized, global trends.

FOMO, thus, triggers a sense of unease related to cultural identity, pushing students to question the relevance of their traditional cultural expressions in the fast-paced and trend-driven digital environment. The need for social connection and validation often forces them to modify or suppress their true cultural identities to fit into a broader, globally recognized narrative, creating internal conflict and uncertainty about their place in the digital world.

#### ***b) Representing Cultural Identity in Digital Interactions***

In various digital spaces, such as online classes, WhatsApp groups, or social media, students make efforts to display their cultural identities. This often involves using language styles reflective of their cultural background, such as regional dialects, or sharing visual content like traditional attire and local cuisine. Additionally, students incorporate cultural references into academic discussions or assignments, adding a personal and cultural dimension to their online presence. These expressions allow students to assert their cultural identity in a digital world that is becoming increasingly globalized.

However, the pressure of FOMO compels students to filter these representations. Fear of being perceived as "weird," "uncool," or "irrelevant" leads them to censor or limit how much of their cultural content they share. As a result, cultural expressions are often constrained or adapted to align with the prevailing digital trends. For example, Malay students typically share cultural content, such as celebrating significant cultural moments like Eid, but quickly shift to more popular content after the celebration. Similarly, Chinese-Indonesian students may add cultural symbols through emojis or captions but avoid discussing sensitive cultural topics that could provoke debate or alienate their audience.

This dynamic shows how FOMO causes cultural expression to become "delayed," meaning that students only share parts of their culture when it aligns with mainstream digital narratives or fits within acceptable social boundaries. As a result, students' cultural identities are often modified, constrained, or even sidelined to avoid disrupting dominant social trends, making it harder for them to fully express their authentic selves in digital environments.

**Table 5.** The Influence of FOMO on Cultural Identity Expression in Digital Spaces

Aspect	Description	Influence of FOMO
Cultural Identification	Awareness of cultural roots in the digital context	Frequently questioned due to perceived misalignment with trends
Cultural Representation	Acts of displaying cultural values/symbols online	Limited by fear of social misfit
Willingness to Display	Extent to which students openly showcase culture	Declines without social support or engagement
Consistency of Expression	Whether students consistently present cultural identity	Inconsistent; contingent on trends, audience, and validation

*Source: Data processed by the researcher, 2025*

In conclusion, cross-cultural students find themselves in an ambivalent position within the digital space. On one hand, they have a strong desire to assert and showcase their cultural identity, expressing their heritage through various digital platforms. On the other hand, they face significant psychosocial pressures driven by FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), which forces them to negotiate their cultural expression in order to meet the social expectations of the digital world. This internal conflict arises as students strive to maintain their authentic cultural identity while simultaneously seeking social acceptance in a digital environment that often values mainstream trends over individuality.

FOMO theory helps explain this dynamic, suggesting that the constant need for social connection and the fear of being excluded from popular digital trends can disrupt the authenticity of cultural identity expression. As a result, students may resort to selectively displaying aspects of their cultural identity, often fragmenting or symbolically presenting it rather than offering a cohesive and genuine representation. This selective representation is driven by the need for validation and the pressure to conform to the dominant social narratives within digital spaces, ultimately affecting the way students interact with and express their cultural selves online.

### ***Forms of FOMO Pressure Experienced by Students in Maintaining or Adjusting Their Cultural Identity in Intercultural Digital Communication***

In the realm of intercultural digital communication, students often encounter FOMO when they feel as though they are falling behind global trends, social norms, or dominant cultural expressions on international digital platforms. This creates a dilemma where students must navigate between preserving their original cultural identity and adapting to a new, globally accepted cultural identity that is perceived as more "cool" or socially rewarding. This pressure to conform to digital norms frequently leads students to question the relevance of their own cultural values in comparison to more widely recognized global trends.

Tajfel's Social Identity Theory offers a valuable framework to understand this process. According to the theory, individuals categorize themselves into social groups (ingroup) and compare themselves to other groups (outgroup) to establish their social self-esteem. In the context of FOMO, students categorize various digital communities - such as international

groups, local communities, or diasporic networks - as social groups (**Categorization process**). They then identify with groups that confer higher social status or greater digital acceptance, often adopting the communication styles or cultural values of dominant groups, such as Western cultures (**Identification process**). The social comparison process is also crucial here, as FOMO pushes students to measure their online presence against more popular digital cultures. This results in fears of being “left behind,” irrelevant, or excluded if they do not adopt the elements of these dominant cultures (**Social comparison process**).

FOMO’s impact on cultural identity is multifaceted. On one hand, students may experience **cultural assimilation**, where their self-expression is altered to fit the expectations of global digital communities, which can obscure their original cultural identities. On the other hand, this process can lead to an **identity crisis**, where students struggle to balance their authentic cultural identities with the pressures of adopting new, global ones. However, some students might respond by reinforcing their ties to their local ingroups (**local ingroup reinforcement**), creating digital spaces of resistance where they can maintain their cultural heritage and celebrate local traditions, such as local culture-based online groups.

In conclusion, Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory reveals how FOMO in intercultural digital communication generates significant social pressures on students to conform to dominant cultural norms within digital spaces. While this may lead to greater group acceptance, it also risks diminishing or distorting students’ authentic cultural identities. This phenomenon underscores the importance of fostering greater awareness of digital group dynamics and promoting cultural literacy, allowing students to navigate global communication spaces while preserving their unique cultural identities.

### ***Communication Strategies Employed by Students to Balance Social Needs Arising from FOMO and Efforts to Preserve Cultural Identity Integrity in Intercultural Digital Interactions***

In the global digital era, students are faced with the challenge of navigating FOMO-induced pressures that compel them to stay constantly connected and socially relevant across diverse intercultural communities. At the same time, they strive to uphold the integrity of their cultural origins, balancing their desire for social connection with the need to preserve their cultural identity. To manage this tension, students develop adaptive and reflective intercultural communication strategies that allow them to engage in digital spaces while maintaining their cultural integrity.

This analysis draws upon two key theoretical frameworks. The first is Edward T. Hall's **High-Context vs. Low-Context Communication Theory**, which distinguishes between cultures based on their communication styles. **High-context cultures**, like many Asian cultures, rely on implicit, relational communication rich in cultural symbols, whereas **low-context cultures**, such as Western cultures, prioritize explicit, direct communication. In response to these dynamics, students communication strategies are **Contextualizing Messages**: students adjust their communication styles to fit the cultural context of their digital environments. For example, they might speak more directly in international forums while embedding cultural symbols like emojis, local language, or traditional references to retain their cultural identity. Another strategy, **hybrid content creation**, involves blending local cultural values with global digital trends. Students create content, like TikTok videos, that feature local music while adopting globally popular narrative styles. These strategies help students mitigate the pressures of FOMO while preserving key cultural markers in their digital communication.

The second theoretical framework is Milton J. Bennett's **Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)**, which outlines stages of intercultural adaptation, from ethnocentrism (denial or resistance to other cultures) to ethnorelativism (adaptation or integration). Students employ several strategies in response to this model. **Selective adaptation** allows them to integrate elements of dominant digital cultures that align with their personal and cultural values, rather than fully assimilating into these cultures. As students progress to the ethnorelative stage, they engage in **cultural reflection**, viewing their own and others' cultures equitably and confidently narrating their cultural experiences without feelings of inferiority. **Digital diplomacy** is another strategy where students carefully choose non-offensive language and foster inclusive dialogues to promote intercultural sensitivity.

By applying Hall and Bennett's frameworks, it becomes clear that students employ communication strategies characterized by adaptability, reflection, and selectivity. They skillfully navigate FOMO-driven social pressures by adjusting their communication styles based on cultural contexts (Hall) and cultivating intercultural awareness through reflective processes (Bennett). In doing so, students do not merely comply with global digital trends; instead, they emerge as cultural agents, able to articulate their identities strategically and thoughtfully within global digital interaction spaces.

## 2. Social Media as a Reinforcer or Weakener of One's Own Culture and Other Cultures in the Context of FOMO

### *Social Media's Role in Strengthening or Weakening Students' Awareness of Their Own Cultural Identity and Other Cultures within the Context of FOMO*

FOMO, or the Fear of Missing Out, is a psychological phenomenon that drives individuals, especially university students, to engage deeply with content on social media due to the fear of being left behind from social experiences that are perceived as valuable. Within the realm of social media, FOMO becomes a primary force behind how students consume and produce content, influencing their behavior in digital spaces. It creates a constant push to stay connected, relevant, and up-to-date with global trends, often shaping how students present their cultural identities online.

When managed reflectively, FOMO can strengthen cultural identity awareness. **Cross-Cultural Exposure:** FOMO motivates students to explore diverse cultures to avoid missing global trends. This can broaden cross-cultural understanding and enhance awareness of their own unique cultural heritage. **Reactivation of Local Identity:** Facing the influx of global cultures, some students are driven to showcase their cultural uniqueness as a digital asset (e.g., local cultural content on TikTok as part of global trends). **Cultural Content Production:** FOMO encourages students to produce culturally based content to maintain relevance in the digital sphere, thereby reinforcing their cultural identity expression.

However, when FOMO is not managed critically, it can weaken cultural identity awareness. **Digital Cultural Conformity:** FOMO leads students to prioritize social acceptance, potentially neglecting or masking their original cultural identities to align with dominant digital cultural norms (e.g., Western lifestyle). **Erosion of Cultural Authenticity:** The urge to appear "trendy" may cause superficial imitation of foreign cultures without critical understanding, rendering their own culture outdated or irrelevant. **Distorted Cultural Representation:** To gain engagement, cultural expression may be reduced to mere visual aesthetics (decontextualized), weakening the true cultural meaning.

This paradox of social media in the context of FOMO is clear: it can either empower cultural expression when approached strategically and reflectively, or it can accelerate the

erosion of cultural identity when driven purely by the need for digital social validation. To navigate this, students must develop **digital-cultural literacy** - the ability to recognize, filter, and manage cultural content responsibly. By doing so, they can maintain the integrity of their cultural identities while engaging with the global digital community, balancing social needs with cultural preservation.

***How FOMO Anxiety Influences Students' Content Choices and Participation in Cultural Discussions on Social Media to Maintain or Transform Their Cultural Identity: A Theoretical Analysis Based on Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory***

In the digital era, social media has become a highly intense arena for intercultural interaction, with students being active users who frequently experience FOMO - anxiety caused by the fear of being left out of conversations, trends, or culturally significant experiences. This anxiety is not only about missing information but is also deeply tied to the need for social recognition and group affiliation. Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory offers a valuable framework for understanding these dynamics, particularly in how students navigate their cultural identity in the digital space.

Tajfel's Social Identity Theory revolves around three core processes: **Social Categorization, Social Identification, and Social Comparison**. First, Social Categorization involves classifying oneself and others into social groups, which helps individuals define their identity. Social Identification follows, where individuals adopt the identity of the group they belong to as part of their self-concept. Finally, Social Comparison comes into play, where individuals compare their own group with others to achieve positive social esteem. These processes are central to how students navigate digital spaces and manage their cultural identities, especially when experiencing FOMO.

In the context of FOMO and digital culture, these processes play a significant role in shaping students' content choices and participation in cultural discussions. For **Social Categorization and Content Selection**, students categorize social media communities into two broad groups: global/international communities, which are often dominated by pop culture and Western trends, and local/national communities, which are centered around their own culture. FOMO impacts content selection by leading students to favor content from the global category, which is perceived as having higher social capital. If local content is seen as "untrendy" or lacking engagement, students may avoid it altogether, preferring instead to align their content preferences with digital groups that hold a higher social status. This is a direct consequence of FOMO, as students seek to conform to the social norms of these larger, more popular digital communities.

In terms of **Social Identification and Cultural Identity Transformation**, students begin to adopt the values, communication styles, and cultural symbols of the digital groups they idealize. As a result, they adjust their cultural expression toward more universal or globally accepted forms. Local cultural identities may be softened or obscured if they are perceived as incompatible with the majority norms of the dominant digital culture. FOMO pushes students to construct digital identities that conform to social platform norms in order to feel "part of the group," leading to a shift in how they express their cultural identity online.

Finally, **Social Comparison and Participation in Cultural Discussions** also play a crucial role in how students engage with their culture in digital spaces. Students compare how their culture is perceived relative to others, especially in digital environments. If their culture is seen as "less appealing" or "behind" in the context of global trends, students may hesitate to participate in local cultural discussions. Instead, they may become more active in dominant or

global cultural conversations, presenting their culture superficially - often reduced to mere aesthetics - to remain relevant in the digital world. This is another manifestation of FOMO, where students' participation decisions are influenced by the perceived cultural status of their own group in digital realms.

The critical conclusion from this analysis is that, through the lens of Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, FOMO encourages students to identify with dominant digital cultural groups for social validation. This leads to complex negotiations between preserving authenticity and adapting to global group norms. Students often engage in strategic cultural consumption and participation, but this comes at the risk of weakening their cultural integrity, especially when it is not paired with critical cultural awareness. In essence, FOMO shifts cultural identity from an essential value to a performative one, where it is contingent upon its acceptance by digital social groups.

***The Impact of FOMO Anxiety on the Quality of Social Relationships and Students' Sense of Attachment to Their Cultural Communities on Social Media Over the Past Six Months: An Analysis Using Edward T. Hall's and Milton J. Bennett's Intercultural Communication Theories.***

In the last six months, students have become increasingly active on social media, especially in following global trends. However, this increased activity is accompanied by significant FOMO anxiety, which impacts the quality of their social relationships and their sense of attachment to their own cultural communities. This analysis examines these dynamics through the lens of two key intercultural communication theories: Edward T. Hall's High-Context vs. Low-Context Communication Theory and Milton J. Bennett's Intercultural Sensitivity Model (DMIS).

Edward T. Hall's **High-Context vs. Low-Context Communication** Theory differentiates cultural communication styles by the level of explicitness in their communication. **High-context cultures**, like Indonesian culture, communicate in implicit, symbolic, and relational ways, emphasizing the importance of social context and underlying values such as politeness, togetherness, and local norms. In contrast, **low-context cultures**, such as Western cultures, communicate in explicit, direct, and verbal forms, focusing on clarity and efficiency. In the context of FOMO, students who feel left behind by global social media trends, which are largely dominated by low-context communication, tend to adopt more instant, expressive, and direct communication styles. This shift helps them remain relevant but comes at the cost of neglecting the depth and relational nature of communication embedded in their high-context cultural communities. As a result, their social relationships often become more transactional and performative, driven by the need for validation rather than genuine connection. Consequently, the quality of these relationships diminishes.

Milton J. Bennett's **Intercultural Sensitivity Model (DMIS)** provides further insight into how FOMO influences students' attachment to their cultural communities. Bennett's model outlines six stages of intercultural adaptation, ranging from ethnocentrism (denial and resistance to other cultures) to ethnorelativism (adaptation and integration). In the context of FOMO, students who are in the ethnocentric or denial stages tend to disregard the values of their cultural community, viewing global digital culture as more "advanced" or desirable. At minimal adaptation stages, FOMO exacerbates the emotional distance from their local culture, which they may perceive as inadequate for digital self-actualization. However, students who reach the adaptation or integration stages are able to successfully balance global digital engagement with loyalty to their local culture, maintaining both connections. Without reaching these stages of

adaptation, students may fail to appreciate their culture in a more ethnorelative sense, instead comparing it hierarchically to global cultures, thus weakening their attachment to their cultural roots.

The critical conclusion drawn from this analysis, based on Hall and Bennett's theories, is that FOMO significantly reduces the quality of students' social relationships and cultural attachment if they overly prioritize their digital existence and the external cultural trends that dominate global platforms. A shift occurs in both their communication style and relational identity, distancing them from the communication patterns of their own cultural community. In order to maintain cultural attachment while engaging in global digital spaces, students must develop mature intercultural sensitivity. This sensitivity enables them to engage meaningfully with both global connectivity and their rooted local identity. Therefore, it is not only digital literacy that is essential but also intercultural intelligence, which allows students to balance the demands of global engagement with the need to preserve their cultural integrity.

### **3. The Role of Digital Peer Pressure in Shaping Cross-Cultural Student Self-Representation Behaviors in the Era of FOMO**

#### ***Students' Recognition of Digital Social Pressure Related to FOMO***

In the digital intercultural communication space, students do not merely exchange information; they observe each other closely, which gives rise to FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) as a form of digital social pressure. This pressure is a social anxiety stemming from perceived exclusion, invisibility, or the fear of failing to meet the online community's existential standards. As students interact in these digital spaces, they begin to recognize this pressure, feeling compelled to continuously follow trends, compare themselves to others, and modify their identities to gain social acceptance.

This digital social pressure can be analyzed through the lens of two intercultural communication theories: **Edward T. Hall's High-Context vs. Low-Context Cultures** and **Milton J. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)**. According to Hall's theory, digital social pressure often originates from low-context cultures, which emphasize explicit, visual, and direct communication styles, such as status updates, opinions, and lifestyle displays. Students from high-context cultures, such as those in Indonesia, which prioritize implicit values, harmony, and politeness, may feel pressured to alter their communicative style to become more "visible" and "audible" in these digital spaces. This pressure to conform nudges them away from their cultural communication norms, making them more inclined to adopt the dominant digital cultural expectations.

Milton J. Bennett's DMIS further explains how students adapt to these pressures. As they transition from denial to adaptation and eventually integration stages in the digital cultural adaptation process, FOMO-driven digital pressure triggers a self-reflection process: "Am I following trends because they are relevant, or because I fear social rejection?" Students who reach the ethnorelative stage of cultural sensitivity recognize that digital social pressure is a social construct rather than an absolute truth. They learn to cultivate selective and non-reactive attitudes toward these pressures, which helps them manage their digital identity without feeling forced to conform.

From the perspectives of Hall and Bennett, it becomes clear that students begin to recognize FOMO-related digital social pressure as a product of differing cultural communication values. They realize that this pressure demands behaviors - such as how they speak, interact, and present themselves - that may not align with their cultural origins. Only through developing intercultural sensitivity and critical reflection can students respond

adaptively to these pressures, maintaining their cultural identity without compromising its integrity. Awareness of such pressures marks a foundational step toward healthier, integrity-driven intercultural digital communication, allowing students to navigate the digital world while staying true to their cultural roots.

### ***Student Response Strategies to FOMO in Digital Interactions***

In digital interactions, students face FOMO as a form of social pressure that emerges from the need to belong to socially relevant or dominant digital groups. This pressure compels them to adjust their behavior, content, and identity in order to gain recognition within online communities. According to Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, individuals construct their social identity through three key processes: Social Categorization, Social Identification, and Social Comparison.

These processes help explain how students respond to the pressures of FOMO and how they navigate their digital identities:

#### 1) Digital Ingroup Reconstruction (Social Categorization)

Students become aware they can create digital communities that reflect their own values and culture, rather than forcing assimilation into dominant groups. Outcome: This strategy allows students to feel "included" without sacrificing their original identity..

#### 2) Balanced Adjustment (Social Identification)

Students selectively adopt desired digital group identities, incorporating only elements consistent with their personal values and cultural roots. Outcome: A flexible yet rooted digital identity emerges.

#### 3) Reframing Social Comparison

Instead of feeling inferior when comparing themselves to global cultures, students cultivate pride in their unique cultural identity as a valuable asset. Outcome: This reduces FOMO anxiety by shifting focus from "chasing existence" to "expressing essence."

#### 4) Dual Identification Strategy

Students consciously integrate two social identities - part of both global digital communities and local cultural groups - navigating them contextually. Outcome: This response demonstrates identity intelligence in managing digital pressures.

In conclusion, through Tajfel's lens, student responses to FOMO are not mere behavioral adaptations but are reflections of deeper social identity negotiation processes. These responses involve efforts to maintain social esteem while navigating the tension between digital recognition and cultural roots. Students who manage FOMO with awareness of their social identity processes tend to exhibit greater adaptability, authenticity, and resilience within digital communication landscapes. By balancing their digital presence with their cultural integrity, they are better equipped to navigate the complex dynamics of intercultural digital spaces.

### ***Communication Strategies Employed by Cross-Cultural Students to Manage FOMO Pressure and Preserve Cultural Identity in Online Spaces***

Cross-cultural students face significant FOMO pressures, which compel them to conform to global communication norms often dominated by low-context, explicit communication styles. At the same time, they are tasked with maintaining and expressing cultural identities that are rooted in high-context, implicit cultural values. In response to these challenges, students employ a variety of communication strategies that enable them to manage FOMO pressures while preserving their cultural identities in online spaces. These strategies can

be analyzed through the frameworks of Hall's High-Context vs. Low-Context Communication Theory and Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS).

According to Hall's theory, students navigate between high-context and low-context communication styles depending on the digital space they occupy (**Contextual Communication Adaptation**). In global digital spaces, which predominantly follow low-context communication styles (direct, explicit, verbal), students adjust their communicative approach to align with these norms, ensuring their messages are understood and received positively. However, they subtly incorporate symbolic cultural elements to maintain a connection with their cultural roots. For example, students might use local language in brief captions, include cultural symbols in visuals, or weave narratives imbued with local values. This strategy enables students to strike a balance between communicative openness in global spaces and the preservation of their cultural identity.

Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) provides another framework for understanding how students manage FOMO pressures. **Movement from Ethnocentrism to Ethnorelativism**: Students move from ethnocentrism - where they may rigidly defend or reject their own culture - to ethnorelativism, where they adapt to intercultural communication norms without losing their cultural identity. When facing FOMO, students develop reflective and critical attitudes, carefully selecting which elements of digital culture to adopt and which aspects of their own culture to retain. This reflective approach allows students to maintain their cultural integrity while also engaging in the global digital landscape. The outcome of this approach is the ability to navigate the complexities of intercultural communication and remain digitally relevant without compromising cultural authenticity.

In addition to these strategies, students employ several other cross-cultural communication techniques to manage FOMO pressures and preserve their cultural identities. One such strategy is the **Hybrid Communication Style**, where students combine low-context (global) and high-context (local) communication modes to deliver messages that are both effective and meaningful. Another strategy is **Selective Interaction**, where students choose online platforms and communities that support authentic cultural expression while also accommodating global trends. Through **Active Intercultural Dialogue**, students engage in online forums and discussions that help reinforce cultural awareness and mitigate FOMO pressure. Finally, **Digital Self-Monitoring** allows students to manage their posted content in a way that showcases their cultural identity positively while still appealing to broader social expectations.

From the perspectives of Hall and Bennett, it is clear that cross-cultural student communication strategies to manage FOMO reflect dynamic adaptation between distinct cultural communication contexts. These strategies also demonstrate the development of intercultural sensitivity, which facilitates the negotiation of identity in digital spaces. Students are not merely withstanding FOMO pressures; instead, they are transforming online communication spaces into arenas where they can intelligently and authentically express their cultural identities while balancing digital social demands with cultural value preservation. Through these adaptive strategies, students demonstrate resilience, authenticity, and integrity in their digital interactions.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Based on the results of this study and the discussion, it can be concluded that:

1) the experience of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) plays a significant role in shaping the formation and negotiation of student identities within cross-cultural interactions on

digital platforms. FOMO drives students to adapt continuously to diverse digital social and cultural norms in an effort to maintain a sense of belonging and social acceptance. This ongoing process of adaptation requires students to selectively appropriate cultural elements and manage their identities in ways that allow them to be accepted in global communities without losing touch with their local cultural roots.

2) Social media plays a dual role in influencing students' cultural identity awareness. On one hand, digital platforms provide students with opportunities to express and appreciate their own cultural identities as well as those of others, fostering interaction and content exchange. On the other hand, the pressures of conforming to global trends and the expectations of peer groups, fueled by FOMO, can undermine students' appreciation of their original cultural values. This often leads to cultural assimilation or, in some cases, alienation from their cultural heritage.

3) The study highlights that digital peer pressure is a central force in shaping the self-representation behaviors of cross-cultural students in the FOMO era. This pressure encourages students to adjust their self-presentation to align with dominant digital cultural norms, in an effort to avoid social exclusion. As a result, students find themselves facing a dilemma between remaining authentic to their cultural identity and seeking social recognition. This tension requires students to engage in ongoing negotiation in their intercultural online communication.

In conclusion, FOMO and digital social pressures create a complex environment for cross-cultural students to navigate, where social media serves as both a platform for identity expression and a challenge in balancing social recognition with the preservation of authentic cultural identity. Students must adapt strategically to the global digital landscape, while also developing critical intercultural awareness to preserve their cultural roots and prevent the erosion of their identities in the digital sphere.

The key findings of this research include the recognition that FOMO triggers cultural identity negotiation among students, leading to the performative construction of cultural identities in digital spaces. Social media serves as an arena for cultural negotiation, where students balance the desire for recognition with the need to remain authentic. While some students are able to adapt successfully by integrating local cultural values with global communication styles, many still require greater intercultural awareness to navigate the challenges posed by digital influences. This research emphasizes the need for students to develop critical skills that allow them to manage FOMO pressures while maintaining a strong connection to their cultural heritage in an increasingly globalized digital world.

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