

Peer Support as a Pathway for Reducing FOMO: A Theoretical Synthesis of Self-Determination and Broaden-and-Build Frameworks

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the potential of peer support group interventions to reduce Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among adolescents in an orphanage, using Positive Psychology frameworks, specifically Self-Determination Theory and the Broaden-and-Build Theory. The aim was to enhance emotional well-being and lower FOMO through mindfulness practices, gratitude exercises, and social support mapping integrated into organised peer support sessions. A mixed-methods approach was employed, including a needs analysis, pre- and post-intervention assessments with the FOMO Scale, and qualitative feedback. Eight adolescents aged 12 to 16 from an orphanage participated in three peer support sessions. Quantitative results indicated modest reductions in FOMO among participants who attended all sessions, whereas inconsistent attendance produced mixed outcomes. Qualitative data highlighted peer conformity pressures and unequal participation as barriers to sustained improvement. Participants reported positive experiences, noting increased emotional awareness and a sense of connectedness. Overall, the findings suggest that peer support interventions grounded in psychology hold promise for reducing FOMO and fostering resilience among vulnerable youth. However, continued engagement and personalised approaches are recommended to achieve greater impact in future research.

Keywords: *Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Peer Support Group, Broaden-and-Build Theory, Self-Determination Theory*

INTRODUCTION

In today's highly connected digital world, social media platforms make it easy for individuals to view curated versions of others' lives, often leading to negative social comparisons. Adolescents, in particular, are very vulnerable to these comparisons, which can diminish appreciation for their own experiences and lead to feelings of inadequacy (Desjarlais, 2024). Exposure to highlight reels, travel photos, and online interactions increases the fear of exclusion, reinforcing a phenomenon known as the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO is generally understood as the worry that others are having enjoyable experiences while one is not, prompting compulsive social media use to stay connected and informed (Ali et al., 2021). This issue is further worsened by underlying vulnerabilities such as loneliness, family conflicts, depression, and low self-efficacy, which are especially common among marginalised

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adolescent groups.

FOMO is an increasing concern among adolescents globally, but it presents even greater challenges for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as adolescents living in orphanages. Separated from family support and social privileges, these young people may experience heightened feelings of abandonment and social isolation. Limited access to peer groups and support networks worsens their vulnerability to FOMO and its associated mental health risks, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Vannucci et al., 2017). Therefore, addressing FOMO within this group is both timely and crucial.

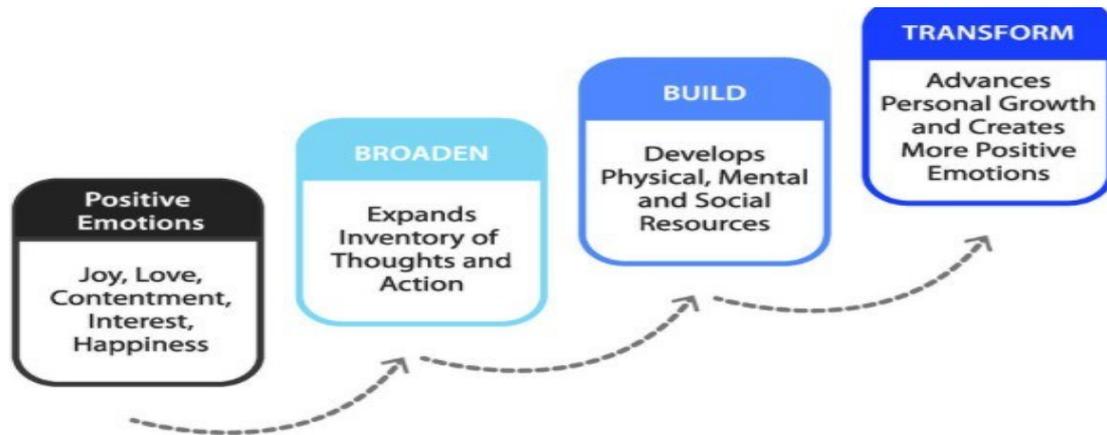
Peer support interventions provide a promising path for alleviating these psychosocial issues. Peers, defined as individuals of similar age and shared experiences, can provide mutual support that fosters empathy, belonging, and emotional validation (Breidenstein, 2008). According to Penney (2018), peer support involves individuals with shared lived experiences offering one another encouragement, understanding, and coping strategies in a reciprocal and empowering manner. For adolescents in orphanages, peer support groups provide safe spaces where they can forge meaningful connections, learn from one another's experiences, and develop a sense of community to counteract the isolation that fuels FOMO.

To improve the effectiveness of such interventions, this study incorporates key concepts from Positive Psychology, particularly Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001). Self-Determination Theory posits that intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and relatedness are essential for psychological well-being, whereas Broaden-and-Build Theory emphasises the role of positive emotions in expanding one's cognitive and behavioural resources. These theories collectively imply that fostering positive emotional states and autonomous engagement can help adolescents shift from external social validation (sought through social media) to internal sources of well-being and resilience.

Previous research underpins this theoretical foundation. Littman-Ovadia and Russo-Netzer (2024) emphasise that FOMO is closely linked to identity development and major life decisions among emerging adults, who cope with it through cognitive, emotional, and behavioural strategies such as reframing thoughts and disengaging from social media. Neal et al. (2021) show that mindfulness-based interventions effectively reduce FOMO tendencies by fostering present-moment awareness, decreasing compulsive social media use, and breaking social comparison cycles. These findings align with the core principles of Broaden-and-Build Theory, which highlights how positive emotional states expand thought–action repertoires, and Self-Determination Theory, which stresses the importance of autonomy and intrinsic motivation in reducing harmful social comparisons.

Building on these theoretical and empirical foundations, this study aims to develop and evaluate a peer support group intervention grounded in Positive Psychology principles. By incorporating practices such as mindfulness, gratitude exercises, and support network mapping, the intervention seeks to foster positive emotional states, strengthen interpersonal connections, and provide adolescents with healthier coping strategies. Specifically, this research investigates whether peer support can reduce the negative impacts of FOMO and promote emotional resilience among adolescents in an orphanage setting.

Figure. 1: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions (adapted from Fredrickson, 2001)



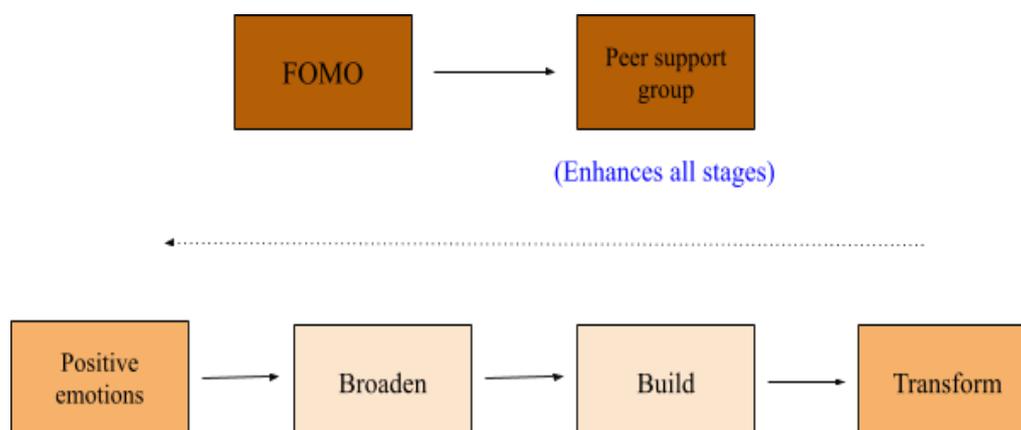
The conceptual framework for this study is based on Fredrickson’s Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions, which suggests that fostering positive emotional experiences widens individuals’ thought-action repertoires and builds lasting personal resources. As shown in Figure 1, the framework highlights four key components: positive emotions, personal resources, social connectedness, and resilience, that together contribute to enhanced well-being and happiness.

This study combines the Broaden-and-Build Theory with the peer support group model as a practical approach to reduce the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among adolescents. Peer support groups provide a safe and empowering environment where individuals can foster feelings of belonging, happiness, and acceptance, which are crucial emotional states that counteract the anxiety and insecurity associated with FOMO. Spiridon et al. (2020) argue that interactions within peer groups encourage positive emotional experiences, such as belonging and happiness, particularly in educational and social settings.

Furthermore, Fransiati et al. (2024) highlight that group mentorship interventions can be especially effective for Generation Z, helping them manage their time better, boost self-confidence, and regulate their emotions, key factors in reducing the effects of FOMO.

Within this integrated framework, peer support groups serve not only as a venue for emotional exchange but also as a driver of the development of social and psychological resources. Through shared experiences and mutual support, adolescents develop coping strategies, relational skills, and emotional resilience that help shift their focus from external validation (often sought on social media) to internal well-being. By aligning the four fundamental elements of the Broaden-and-Build Theory with peer support practices, the present study indicates that positive emotional experiences created in these groups will foster enduring resources and ultimately decrease FOMO.

Figure. 2: The conceptual framework from the integration of Broaden-and-Build Theory with Peer Support Group to reduce Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)



Research Questions:

1. What Positive Psychology strategies can be used to reduce Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among adolescents living in an orphanage?
2. To what extent is a peer support group intervention, grounded in Positive Psychology principles, effective in reducing FOMO among adolescents living in an orphanage?

Research Objectives:

1. To identify and explore Positive Psychology-based strategies that can be applied to reduce Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among adolescents living in an orphanage.
2. To assess the effectiveness of a Positive Psychology-informed peer support group intervention in reducing FOMO among adolescents living in an orphanage.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This exploratory study adopts a mixed-methods research design to examine the contributing factors, psychological effects, and coping strategies associated with Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among adolescents. The research was carried out in three successive phases, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

This study employed a quasi-experimental, one-group pretest-posttest design, as described in the methodology section. No control group was included because the primary aim was to evaluate the initial effectiveness and feasibility of a brief peer support intervention for adolescents in an orphanage. A total of 8 adolescents, aged 12 to 16 years, participated in 3 peer support sessions. Additionally, the participants belong to a minority group that has faced social and familial disadvantages; therefore, it was considered ethically and logistically appropriate to begin with a single-group design.

The initial phase involved a **needs assessment**, employing semi-structured questions to explore participants' personal experiences, emotional challenges, and coping strategies related

to FOMO. This qualitative component helped contextualise the adolescents' lived experiences and guided the development of the intervention module.

The second phase involved **quantitative assessments**, employing a pre-test and post-test design. The **Fear of Missing Out Scale** (Przybylski et al., 2013), a validated self-report instrument, was administered to measure participants' FOMO levels before and after the intervention. This assessment provided baseline and outcome data on participants' levels of FOMO.

The third phase involved implementing a **peer support group intervention module**, conducted between the pre- and post-test phases. The intervention aimed to promote emotional support, peer connection, and the use of Positive Psychology-based coping strategies. The sessions centred on experience-sharing, psychoeducation, and practical activities such as mindfulness and gratitude exercises designed to reduce FOMO in participants' daily lives. This multi-phase, mixed-methods approach enabled both an in-depth exploration of participants' psychosocial experiences and an initial assessment of the peer support group's effectiveness in addressing FOMO.

Participants

The study involves eight participants aged 12 years or older living in an orphanage. It includes seven females and one male, selected through purposive sampling. The group is diverse in terms of gender, background, and experiences, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of FOMO in this context. Since most are under 18, their guardians are responsible for providing informed consent, and ethical approval was obtained before data collection. Participation is entirely voluntary, and they may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Measures

The FOMO Scale developed by Przybylski et al. (2013) is used in this study as a primary measure to assess participants' levels of FOMO, which is characterised by the feeling of apprehension that one is missing out on rewarding information, events, experiences, or life decisions.

This scale measures various aspects of FOMO, including how often these feelings occur and their effects on social connections and overall well-being. The scale aims to reflect participants' typical experiences in daily life. These 10 items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 is "not at all true of me", and 5 is "extremely true of me"; the highest score indicates a high level of FOMO.

Alongside pre-test and post-test assessments, observational data and facilitator notes were collected to evaluate the effectiveness of the peer support group intervention module in fostering coping strategies and emotional support. By combining quantitative and qualitative measures, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the psychological and behavioural implications of FOMO.

Procedure

The study began with a needs analysis, during which researchers examined participants' lived experiences of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and their existing coping strategies. This

qualitative phase provided crucial contextual insights to inform the intervention's design. Eight adolescents aged 12 to 16 years were recruited from a nearby orphanage in Gombak through purposive sampling, based on their suitability for the intervention focus. Coordination with the orphanage caregiver and management was established via WhatsApp and email to organise the sessions and manage logistical arrangements. Informed consent was obtained from the participants' legal guardians before the study commenced, in accordance with ethical guidelines. To assess baseline FOMO levels, participants completed a pre-test questionnaire using the validated Fear of Missing Out Scale (Przybylski et al., 2013) prior to the first intervention session. The peer support group intervention was delivered over **three structured sessions**, each incorporating experiential learning and Positive Psychology-based activities aimed at alleviating FOMO-related distress.

- **Session 1: Recognising FOMO** — This session introduced the concept of FOMO and encouraged participants to reflect critically on their social media habits and personal experiences, helping them identify the emotional and cognitive origins of their FOMO.
- **Session 2: Coping with FOMO** — Participants were introduced to adaptive coping strategies, including mindfulness practices and self-care activities, aimed at managing FOMO-related anxiety and enhancing emotional regulation.
- **Session 3: Shifting Focus** — The final session concentrated on fostering gratitude, enhancing personal relationships, and recognising supportive peer networks, promoting a move from external validation to intrinsic well-being.

Following the intervention, participants completed the **post-test questionnaire** to measure changes in FOMO levels. The collected quantitative and qualitative data were then analysed to evaluate shifts in participants' FOMO experiences and to assess the overall effectiveness of the peer support group intervention.

Data Analysis for the Need Analysis

Interview sessions were conducted to collect feedback from participants during this campaign. This approach enabled a detailed examination of the causes of FOMO, its psychological and emotional effects, and the coping strategies participants employed. The interview data were systematically analysed using thematic analysis, and key themes were identified to guide the development of potential interventions.

Data Analysis of a Positive Psychology-informed Peer Support Group Intervention for Reducing FOMO

As the number of participants was limited, the effectiveness of the peer support group could not be analysed using IBM SPSS 27. Therefore, to measure the campaign's effectiveness, researchers manually calculated the differences between pre-test and post-test scores. The individual score was obtained by summing all the scores and dividing by 10 (FOMO questions). This calculation was performed for both the pre-test and post-test. This method compares participants' FOMO levels before and after the intervention, aiming to identify significant differences. The analysis assessed whether participation in the sessions led to a measurable reduction in FOMO, providing insights into the programme's overall effectiveness.

Ethical Consideration

Before the study was carried out, participants and their caregivers received clear and detailed information about its purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Since the participants were minors, informed consent was obtained from their caregivers, who were

contacted directly to ensure they understood the study and approved the child's participation. Consent was given voluntarily, without coercion or undue pressure. Confidentiality and communication were consistently maintained throughout the study to keep both participants and caregivers informed, ensuring transparency and fostering an environment in which participants felt empowered to engage meaningfully in the process.

RESULTS

Themes Identified from the Needs Analysis

1. Social Issues

Many adolescents shared experiences of peer exclusion and comparison, often linked to missed school attendance or being left out of group activities. Several mentioned feeling disconnected when returning to school after absences, as peers had formed new dynamics or inside stories without them. This recurring sense of exclusion within peer circles fostered social insecurity and contributed significantly to the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO).

2. Emotional Issues

Emotional struggles were a prominent theme among participants. Adolescents described feeling sad, jealous, anxious, and sometimes angry when excluded from social events or unable to participate in activities others were doing. Some also reported internalising these feelings, crying alone, or hiding their emotions. Emotional instability and limited outlets for expression increased their vulnerability to FOMO, particularly when exposed to social media content that sparked comparison and envy.

3. Lack of Satisfaction in Life

Several participants expressed dissatisfaction with their daily routines and life circumstances, perceiving their experiences as monotonous and less fulfilling than those of others. Exposure to peers' achievements, family outings, or online posts of leisure activities reinforced feelings of inadequacy. This perceived lack of enjoyment and opportunities in their own lives heightened the sense of "missing out" and contributed to lower emotional well-being.

4. Distraction

Adolescents often turned to digital media or other passive activities to distract themselves from loneliness, boredom, or distress. Some watched YouTube or listened to music to block intrusive thoughts or fill empty time. Although these distractions provided temporary relief, they inadvertently increased FOMO as engagement with digital content frequently exposed them to others' more vibrant lives.

5. Curiosity

Curiosity acted as a powerful motivator for participants' online actions. They explained feeling driven to check updates, stories, and messages to stay informed about friends' activities. This curiosity was often linked to social comparison and a fear of being left out of conversations or experiences. For some, curiosity was not just about interest but also caused

anxiety about missing important social cues or information.

6. Habit

The use of social media and digital devices had become habitual and automatic for most participants. Scrolling, checking messages, or browsing feeds were daily routines rather than deliberate actions. This habitual engagement reinforced dependence on technology and reduced time spent in meaningful offline interactions, indirectly sustaining a cycle of FOMO and emotional dissatisfaction.

7. Need for Connection (Family and Friends)

A recurring and significant theme was the need for emotional closeness and connection with family and friends. Many adolescents felt deprived of family bonding due to separation, parental work commitments, or institutional living arrangements. The lack of strong emotional ties increased their dependence on online relationships as substitutes, but these digital interactions often lacked genuine connection, leaving them feeling even more isolated.

8. Educational Purposes

Some participants reported using digital devices for educational or learning purposes, such as completing assignments or researching school topics. However, their usage often shifted into entertainment or social comparison. This blurred boundary between academic and leisure use led to extended screen time and exposure to FOMO-triggering content, as participants viewed others' more active or privileged lives online.

9. Distraction Techniques

To handle emotional discomfort, adolescents used various distraction techniques such as watching movies, playing games, listening to music, or sleeping. Some also talked or ate to avoid overthinking. While these activities provided temporary relief, they did not address the underlying emotional needs, leading to continued reliance on avoidance instead of emotional processing.

10. Social Support

A few participants highlighted the importance of supportive peers or caregivers in helping them manage their emotions. Sharing experiences or being listened to lessened feelings of exclusion and loneliness. This theme emphasises the protective role of social support, consistent with the positive psychology literature, in reducing the impact of FOMO through connection and belonging.

11. Self-Realisation

Some adolescents developed greater self-awareness about their emotions and behaviours. They realised that comparing themselves on social media and withdrawing worsened their sadness and envy. Although still emerging, this understanding marked the start of self-regulation and reflective thinking, indicating potential for growth through guided interventions that focus on self-esteem, gratitude, and mindfulness.

Development of the Peer Support Group Model

The peer support group model was created by combining key ideas from Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions, establishing a theoretical basis for the intervention activities.

Application of Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory emphasises the fulfilment of three essential psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which encourage intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020). These components were incorporated into the peer support sessions through activities designed to foster interpersonal learning and emotional resilience.

One such activity, the “FOMO Scenarios Roleplay,” was carried out in Session 1. Participants were tasked with role-playing everyday social situations in which they might experience FOMO and with collaboratively discussing coping strategies. This activity promoted relatedness through peer interaction and emotional sharing, while strengthening competence as participants learned and practised new problem-solving skills. In line with Lovegrove Lepisto (2021), such collaborative learning environments foster self-awareness, social bonding, and communication skills, thereby creating a psychologically supportive space for adolescents.

Application of Broaden-and-Build Theory

The intervention also drew on the Broaden-and-Build Theory, which suggests that positive emotions expand cognitive and behavioural repertoires, fostering the development of lasting psychological and social resources (Stifter et al., 2019). Several activities were designed to evoke such positive emotional states.

- **Coping Toolbox Creation:** Participants designed a personalised “coping toolbox,” filling it with enjoyable activities such as hobbies, sports, and journaling, as well as things they could turn to when experiencing FOMO. According to Mansourian (2021), engaging in meaningful leisure promotes emotional well-being and social connectedness, enhancing coping abilities.
- **Mindfulness Exercise:** During relaxation activities, participants practised the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique, helping them focus on the present moment and reduce intrusive thoughts. This mindfulness practice is supported by Sofia et al. (2023) and Johnson et al. (2021), who report that mindfulness significantly reduces negative emotional states and FOMO among adolescents, particularly in Generation Z.
- **Gratitude Jar Activity:** Participants identified and recorded things they were grateful for, placing their reflections into a shared “gratitude jar.” This activity aimed to cultivate gratitude, a key positive emotion highlighted in Broaden-and-Build Theory. Prior research by Rosyida & Romadhani (2022) found that gratitude practices effectively reduce FOMO among digital-native adolescents by shifting the focus towards positive life experiences.
- **Support Network Mapping:** Recognising the importance of social connections in buffering against FOMO, participants developed support network maps to visually identify key supportive figures in their lives, whether friends, family, or caregivers. This activity encouraged adolescents to seek help from these individuals during moments of emotional vulnerability. Szawłoga et al. (2024) similarly emphasise that

strong social connections serve as protective factors against the adverse emotional effects of FOMO.

Module Integration

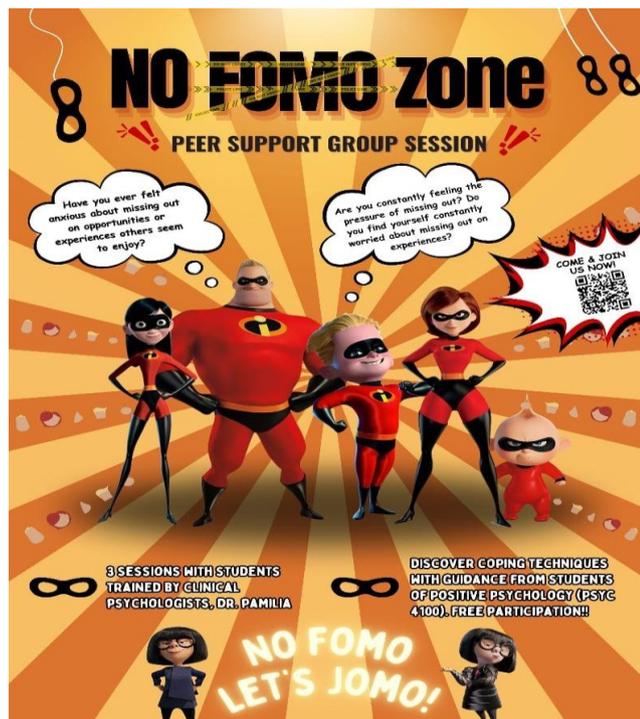
The developed peer support group sessions included theory-based activities to target both intrapersonal and interpersonal factors contributing to FOMO. Through structured reflection, emotional skill development, and peer connection, the intervention aimed to create an environment where adolescents could build lasting personal resources and reduce their reliance on external validation sources, such as social media.

Table 1: Table of Peer Support Group, No FOMO Zon

Module	Objective	Sessions	Activities	Duration
What is FOMO? Recognizing Its Impact	Help participants to identify and understand FOMO in their daily lives	1	Social Media Reality vs. Perception (Help participants critically analyse how social media contributes to FOMO)	20 Minutes
			<i>Debriefing</i>	5 Minutes
			FOMO Scenarios Roleplay (Participants act out relatable FOMO situations and discuss their reactions)	20 Minutes
			<i>Debriefing</i>	5 Minutes
			A letter of Self-Compassion (Participants write down an aspect of their life that make them happy and some aspect in their life that they dislike)	20 Minutes
			<i>Debriefing</i>	5 Minutes
Fun Ways to Cope with FOMO	Introduce healthy and enjoyable ways to cope with FOMO in their daily lives	2	Coping Toolbox Creation (Participants decorate their own toolbox on a paper by brainstorming fun and easy activities such as hobbies, sports, watching movie)	25 Minutes
			<i>Debriefing</i>	5 Minutes
			Relaxation Activity (Participants and introduce a simple mindfulness exercise like 5-4-3-2-1 grounding and breathing exercises)	15 Minutes
			<i>Debriefing</i>	5 Minutes
			Peer Tips Circle (Participants share coping tips that they found helpful and list them into a paper)	20 Minutes

			named “FOMO Fighters Strategies”)	
			<i>Debriefing</i>	5 Minutes
Focusing on What Really Matters	Change from comparison to gratitude, connection and personal goals	3	Gratitude Jar (Participants write down or draw something they are grateful and put it in the “Gratitude Jar”)	20 Minutes
			<i>Debriefing</i>	5 Minutes
			Support Network Mapping (Participants draw their support circle such as friends and family, discuss who they can turn to when they feel FOMO)	20 Minutes
			<i>Debriefing</i>	5 Minutes

Figure 4: Poster advertising the peer support group in the present study



Sociodemographic Information

The peer support group mainly consists of adolescents aged 12 to 16. Most participants are Muslim and Malay, with the majority being female. Regarding educational background, five participants are from primary school, and six are from secondary school. Additionally, many participants reported living with their parents, while others reside with guardians such as grandparents or other relatives.

Pre-test and Post-test

Table 2: Table of Participants' Results Who Attended Three Peer Support Group Sessions

Participants	Pre-test	Post-test
P1	1.6	1.5
P2	1.4	1.6
P3	3.3	3.1

Based on the table above, Participant 1 (P1) scored 1.6 in the pre-test, while Participant 2 (P2) scored 1.4, and Participant 3 (P3) scored 3.3. After attending the three sessions, there are slight variations in the scores. P1's post-test score is 1.5, P2's is 1.6, and P3's is 3.1. These results are inconsistent: P2 shows a marginal increase, suggesting a minor regression. Participant 2 might have experienced a slight increase in FOMO during and after the sessions. However, P1 and P3's scores decreased, suggesting some improvement from the intervention. Overall, the changes are subtle and minimal, reflecting varied effects of the interventions.

Table 3: Table of Participants' Results Who Attended Two Peer Support Group Sessions

Participants	Pre-test	Post-test
P4	1.0	1.4
P5	2.8	2.5
P6	1.7	2.0
P7	2.6	2.7
P8	1.3	2.3

From the table above, Participant 4 (P4), who attended two of the three sessions, showed changes in both pre-test and post-test scores. Their scores increased by 1.0 in the pre-test and 1.4 in the post-test. The increase of (+ 0.4 difference) suggests that the intervention may not be effective for P4, as their score worsened. Conversely, Participant 6 (P6) exhibited a significant rise in score from 1.7 to 2.0, indicating an increase in FOMO after attending only two sessions of the peer support group. Meanwhile, Participant 7 (P7) experienced a slight increase in the post-test score from 2.6 to 2.7, suggesting the session may or may not have been beneficial for the participant. Lastly, Participant 8 (P8) saw a notable increase in their FOMO score from 1.3 to 2.3 after the session ended. However, only Participant 5 (P5) showed a slight improvement, with their score decreasing from 2.8 to 2.5. Overall, four out of five participants who attended only two sessions showed an increase in their FOMO levels, suggesting that session duration may or may not be helpful.

Feedback from the participants

Moreover, to further reinforce the results, interview sessions were conducted with the participants after the programme to assess its effectiveness in understanding and managing Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). The researcher needs to identify and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the peer support group to enable more effective sessions in the future.

Participants provide many types of feedback. In the peer support group, most participants stated that they are happy and enjoy the sessions they have attended because of the

researcher's engagement and support. As a result, they find it easy to understand FOMO in their daily lives and feel motivated to manage FOMO as adolescents. As two participants mentioned, *"I like it because it's fun to meet you and be given encouragement, and not to be too FOMO about others."*, *"I like how all of you treat everyone well, always encourage us, and are easy to understand."* and *"I believe I can strengthen relationships and learn new things."*

Besides that, two participants stated that the sessions helped them to understand and pay attention to the FOMO they had never experienced before. It helps them value the opportunity for self-reflection and personal growth. As they mentioned in their feedback, *"excellent because you provide a lot of ideas and attention," "I learn a lot about FOMO throughout all these sessions,"* and *"you provide a lot of insight strategies to me for fighting with FOMO."* Moreover, some participants reported gaining positive insights that improved their emotional well-being. As they quoted in their feedback, *"I gain a lot of positive vibes, and I feel better than I did before."*

Lastly, several participants expressed their appreciation towards the researchers, stating they felt comfortable and supported throughout the sessions. Since all participants are adolescents aged 12-16, they found it easy to engage and trust in a nurturing environment. As the participants mentioned, *"all of you are so fun"*, *"all of you are so friendly and kind."* *"All of you are very cute and kind-hearted. I really like you. If there's fortune, may they have a long life and be granted good health. I hope we meet again in the best version of ourselves! And "nothing is lacking, everything is enough"*.

The feedback provided was valuable regarding the effectiveness of the peer support sessions. Most respondents reported feeling happy and engaged in the programme, and that the activities and the way the programme was delivered helped them to understand FOMO in their daily lives and to learn to manage it more effectively.

Some participants noted that the sessions also helped them gain a fresh perspective and offered ideas and strategies they hadn't considered before, which they valued as opportunities for self-reflection and personal development. Others reported that the sessions made them feel positive and contributed to their emotional well-being. Several participants also expressed their appreciation to the facilitators, describing the sessions as supportive, fun, and encouraging, fostering a safe and comfortable environment for open interaction. These reflections indicate that, although no other quantitative measures were taken, the qualitative feedback demonstrates the potential benefits of the intervention in enhancing participants' awareness, resilience, and positive feelings.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effectiveness of a peer support group intervention, based on Self-Determination Theory and the Broaden-and-Build Theory, in helping adolescents from an orphanage recognise, cope with, and shift their focus away from the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Through three structured sessions incorporating Positive Psychology practices, the intervention aimed to equip participants with emotional regulation strategies and social support tools to lessen FOMO in their daily lives.

The intervention involved eight adolescents, aged 12 to 16, who participated in activities such as social media reality-versus-perception exercises, FOMO scenario role-plays,

mindfulness practices, gratitude reflections, and support network mapping. These activities aimed to promote self-awareness, emotional well-being, and social connectedness, which are fundamental elements of both theoretical frameworks.

Effectiveness of the Peer Support Group

Findings revealed mixed outcomes: the intervention was moderately effective for participants who fully engaged in all three sessions, but results were less consistent among those with partial attendance. Participants who attended all sessions showed slight reductions in FOMO scores, suggesting that consistent exposure to positive emotional practices and peer discussions may foster greater resilience and awareness regarding FOMO. These results align with the Broaden-and-Build Theory, which suggests that repeated positive emotional experiences can broaden cognitive perspectives and develop psychological resources for well-being. Conversely, participants who attended fewer sessions experienced inconsistent changes, with some reporting an increase in FOMO. This variation may reflect missed opportunities to internalise key coping strategies and emotional regulation techniques presented during the sessions.

Potential Influences on Outcomes

Several factors could explain these mixed results. Firstly, peer conformity seemed to influence participants' engagement and self-reported responses. Observations during the sessions showed that some participants echoed their peers' answers or emotional expressions rather than offering genuine reflections. This tendency aligns with research on adolescent peer conformity, which emphasises its significant role in shaping behaviour and social responses (Cakirpaloglu et al., 2021). High levels of peer conformity may have affected both the reliability of the pre- and post-test assessments and the intervention's actual effect.

Secondly, inconsistent attendance at sessions probably reduced the intervention's effectiveness. Participants who missed one or more sessions were not exposed to essential elements, such as mindfulness practices and gratitude activities, which restricted their ability to use these coping strategies. This aligns with previous research indicating that incomplete participation in behavioural interventions often weakens their intended outcomes (Stripling, 2018).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Several limitations of the current study should be recognised. Firstly, the intervention consisted of only three sessions, which may not have been enough for participants to fully grasp Positive Psychology concepts or establish meaningful peer connections. Longer-term interventions with booster sessions could facilitate more sustained skill development and emotional growth.

Secondly, participant engagement levels varied, with some adolescents demonstrating passive participation. This passive behaviour, likely influenced by peer conformity, may have affected the authenticity of their learning and diminished the intervention's impact. Future research could address this by incorporating anonymous activities or individual reflections to foster more honest responses and reduce conformity pressure.

Thirdly, reliance on self-reported measures can introduce bias, including social desirability effects where participants might underreport their feelings to match perceived expectations. To improve the validity of future findings, it is advised to incorporate third-party

observations, caregiver feedback, or behavioural assessments alongside self-reported data (Latkin et al., 2017).

Integrating an Islamic Perspective

From an Islamic perspective, the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) can be tackled through fundamental spiritual principles such as gratitude (*syukr*), contentment (*qana'ah*), and reliance on Allah (*tawakkul*). These values inspire individuals to focus on their blessings rather than what they lack.

As highlighted in Surah Ibrahim, verse 34:

"And He gave you of all that you asked for. If you should count the favours of Allah, you could not enumerate them."

This verse encourages contemplation of the abundance of divine blessings, counteracting the dissatisfaction and envy that often fuel FOMO. Incorporating spiritual reflection and gratitude practices based on Islamic teachings can provide an extra layer of emotional resilience for Muslim adolescents dealing with social comparisons and feelings of exclusion.

Overall, this study emphasises the potential of peer support groups, guided by Positive Psychology theories, to reduce FOMO and strengthen emotional resilience among adolescents in orphanages. However, consistent participation and personalised engagement are essential to optimise the intervention's benefits. Future research should investigate longer-term peer support models, incorporate spiritual frameworks where appropriate, and employ a broader range of assessment tools to understand adolescents' social-emotional development better.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effect of a peer support group intervention grounded in the Broaden-and-Build Theory (BBT) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) on reducing Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among adolescents in an orphanage. The intervention involved structured, theory-based activities such as role-playing, mindfulness, and gratitude exercises designed to promote social connection, emotional resilience, and self-awareness.

Findings revealed that adolescents who consistently attended all three sessions experienced a modest reduction in FOMO, indicating the intervention's potential to support emotional regulation and self-reflection through peer-based learning. Conversely, participants with partial attendance showed higher FOMO levels, suggesting that limited exposure, peer conformity pressures, and a short intervention duration may have prevented the complete internalisation of positive psychology concepts. Self-reported data may also have introduced response bias.

These results align with SDT principles, where increased relatedness was fostered through group bonding, and improved competence was observed as participants acquired coping tools through regular attendance. However, autonomy may have been constrained by attendance requirements and social conformity, which could have slowed overall progress. This interpretation aligns with Day et al. (2022), who highlighted that interventions combining

autonomy-supportive and socially connective activities most effectively enhance self-regulation, and with Lemay et al. (2019), who found that higher autonomy satisfaction predicts lower FOMO and loneliness.

From an applied perspective, these findings emphasise practical strategies for educators and caregivers in classrooms and shelter homes. Structured peer programmes can help adolescents develop independent coping skills, emotional regulation, and problem-solving abilities through guided activities such as role-plays and coping toolkits. Similarly, practices of gratitude, group sharing, and mutual support can enhance relatedness and foster psychological resilience. Within an Islamic context, these outcomes align with the values of gratitude (syukr), contentment (qana'ah), and trust in Allah (tawakkul), thereby promoting both psychological and spiritual well-being.

In conclusion, this study shows that SDT and BBT together offer a helpful framework for designing peer-based interventions that tackle FOMO and foster emotional flourishing among vulnerable adolescents. Although the results are preliminary, they highlight the potential of positive psychology approaches to enhance autonomy, competence, relatedness, and positive emotion—essential components for sustained well-being. Future research should extend the intervention duration, include objective measures of change, and incorporate autonomy-supportive strategies to improve engagement and long-term effectiveness.

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