




Research Article

Analysis of the Interpretation Nafs Verses in the Qur'an and Its Relevance to the FOMO Phenomenon

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Analysis of the Interpretation Nafs Verses in the Qur'an and Its Relevance to the FOMO Phenomenon

Abstract. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a term referring to the anxiety or worry individuals feel about missing out on information, experiences, or events happening elsewhere. Factors contributing to FOMO include the ease of access to information, especially through social media. While social media, with all its features, greatly assists human work, this is only true if accompanied by effective self-regulation. Conversely, abundant information can negatively impact a person's psychological stability. This study aims to analyze the ulama's interpretation of the nafs verses (Ammārah, Lawwāmāh, and Muṭma'innah) as a basis for understanding the dynamics of the human soul. These three verses were

selected because commentators explicitly cite them as crucial categories in discussions of the human psyche. The research analysis was conducted in three stages: (1) exploring scholars' interpretations of the nafs verses; (2) mapping FOMO symptoms based on modern psychological literature; and (3) integrating the two to find common ground specifically, how the nafs verses can explain the FOMO phenomenon and simultaneously offer a Qur'anic solution. The findings show that the nafs concept in the Qur'an is highly relevant to the FOMO phenomenon, particularly in explaining impulsive urges, self-reflection, and inner peace as strategies for coping with digital anxiety.

Keywords: Nafs, FOMO, Integrating

INTRODUCTION

The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon has emerged as an integral part of the development of information technology, particularly social media. FOMO refers to the feeling of anxiety or worry that one will miss out on an interesting experience, event, or opportunity happening elsewhere.¹ This anxiety arises because social media algorithms have the potential to foster poor habits by encouraging excessive information consumption. By adapting to user preferences, social media guarantees a form of digital pleasure. If this isn't managed effectively, however, it can lead to detrimental consequences. High-intensity social media use is a major contributing factor to FOMO, alongside concepts like self-regulation and the Big Five Personality Traits.² While the ease of access to information in the current era offers enormous benefits, receiving too much information also carries a downside: potential psychological damage.

Social media works by capturing users' attention with a constant flow of information, which, in turn, generates a feeling of satisfaction. This satisfaction stems from feeling entertained, educated, or finding a personal connection with the content they receive. Conversely, users who consume too much information from social media often feel uncomfortable if they perceive a mismatch between other people's activities and their own circumstances.³ For example, when someone sees a friend's post about a luxury vacation and shopping spree while they are working hard and sacrificing time due to financial pressures, this mismatch is a major cause of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO is closely related to various aspects of an individual's motivation, behavior, and overall well-being. Ultimately, it can significantly influence how individuals interact with social media and how they perceive their daily lives.

¹ Patrick J. McGinnis, *The FOMO Sapiens Handbook* (New York: www.patrickmcginnis.com, 2023), p. 8

² Ayu Nur Laila Sari Siregar, "Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) Dalam Al-Qur'an" (UIN Prof. KH. Saifuddin Zuhri, 2022), pp. 1-6

³ Jasmine Talitha Azzahra Nasution, "Pengaruh Intensitas Penggunaan Media Sosial Instagram Terhadap Perasaan FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) Pada Mahasiswa Psikologi Universitas Medan Area" (Universitas Medan Area, 2024), p. 16

FOMO is a natural human social response that has been exacerbated by the recent surge in social media usage.⁴ According to a 2024 survey by the IDN Research Institute, which polled 602 respondents, 14% of Gen Z spends 6 to 10 hours on social media daily, and 5% spends more than 10 hours.⁵ This massive interaction on social media has led to the formation of "social media standards." These standards become indirect social constructs in cyberspace, setting benchmarks for things like ideal partners, beauty standards, harmonious families, young success, and even friendships.⁶ However, these standards often prove detrimental to many users who feel unable to realize them in their own lives. Such problems arise when the expectations created by social media standards clash with life's realities. This collision ultimately causes individuals to feel like they have failed to meet those benchmarks, resulting in significant internal anxiety.

Anxiety is the most common symptom of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon. The advent of social media and its various features make it incredibly easy to track what others are doing. Consequently, individuals frequently exposed to this unlimited external information develop a habit of constantly needing to know what's going on.⁷ This ingrained habit ultimately forms the FOMO pattern, where individuals frequently check and access social media to constantly monitor others' activities. Research by JWT Intelligence supports this, finding that FOMO causes anxiety rooted in internal emotions. Individuals feel left behind and missing out when they discover others are engaging in activities they perceive as more interesting than what they're currently doing.⁸ These negative impacts worsen significantly if a person lacks self-control, often leading to addiction.

The ease of access to social media in this era must be accompanied by self-control.⁹ Self-control is an individual's ability to organize, guide, direct, and regulate their own behavior to ensure a positive influence.¹⁰ After all, technology is simply a tool meant to help human needs and work run effectively and efficiently. Ideally, people should have full control over their work, allowing them to filter out external factors that could potentially hinder them. However, the phenomenon we've been discussing shows that individuals often lack control when accessing information, especially through social media. Chronic, subconscious habits can lead them to

⁴ Elisa Wegmann et al., "Online-Specific Fear of Missing out and Internet-Use Expectancies Contribute to Symptoms of Internet-Communication Disorder," *Addictive Behaviors Reports* 5, no. April (2017): 33–42, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.abrep.2017.04.001>.

⁵ IDN Research Institute, "Indonesia Gen Z Report 2024.," 2024.

⁶ Ahmad Abdul Hakim, Hari Widiyanto, and Najih Abqori, "Fenomena Tiktok Dalam Mempengaruhi Ekspektasi Pernikahan," *Cendikia Ilmiah* 4, no. 2 (2025): 3101–7.

⁷ Tara C. Marshall, Katharina Lefringhausen, and Nelli Ferenczi, "The Big Five, Self-Esteem, and Narcissism as Predictors of the Topics People Write about in Facebook Status Updates," *Personality and Individual Differences* 85 (2015): 35–40, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.04.039>.

⁸ Ditya Tri Amelia, "Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) Pada Masa Dewasa Awal," *CAUSALITA : Journal of Psychology* 1, no. 1 (2023): 28–37, <https://doi.org/10.62260/causalita.viii.5>.

⁹ Cecilie Schou Andreassen, "Online Social Network Site Addiction: A Comprehensive Review," *Current Addiction Reports* 2, no. 2 (2015): 175–84, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40429-015-0056-9>.

¹⁰ D'zurilla, Thomas J., and Marvin R. Goldfried, "Problem Solving and Behavior Modification," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 78, no. 1 (1971): 107.

become trapped in endless feelings of anxiety, worry, and the fear of missing out on interesting information about others.

In Islam, the Quran details human nature, including the status of the soul as a key component of self-control. Although the soul, which the Quran call the *nafs*, is distinct from the body, it plays a vital role in every human decision.¹¹ Whether someone intends to act (e.g., eat, sleep, exercise) or makes a choice (e.g., watch the news or a movie, listen to pop or jazz music, steal or endure hunger), it always originates from an impulse that results from a subconscious reaction. This suggests a link between FOMO—a widely discussed psychological phenomenon—and the *nafs* (self-control) as taught in the Quran. The intersection of these two topics lies within the realm of human decision-making, which is inextricably linked to the subconscious mind.

Several previous studies have examined the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon from various angles. Contemporary psychological research often emphasizes self-regulation and self-control as key factors. Zahroh and Sholichah, for example, stressed that self-regulation plays a crucial role in managing the effects of FOMO among student Instagram users.¹² Similar findings were obtained by Purba, Matulesy, and Haque, who identified a negative correlation between FOMO levels and psychological well-being.¹³ Savitri and Suprihatin also confirmed that high self-control can effectively reduce the tendency toward social media addiction among Z-Generation.¹⁴ Similarly, Sianipar and Kaloeti highlighted that self-regulation skills serve as a protective factor against the risk of FOMO.¹⁵ The general pattern across these studies clearly indicates that the self-regulation dimension significantly influences an individual's psychological stability when dealing with FOMO.

On the other hand, several studies have attempted to link psychological symptoms to an Islamic perspective. Siregar, for instance, interpreted verse 155 of Surah Al-Baqarah, emphasizing that solutions to FOMO symptoms can be found through a spiritual approach, such as patience and prayer.¹⁶ Hamali compared Sigmund Freud's personality theory with the concept of personality in Islam

¹¹ Muhammad Arwani Rofi'i Rofi'i, "Al-Nafs Dalam Al-Qur'an: Makna, Macam Dan Karakteristiknya," *Al-I'jaz: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an, Falsafah Dan Keislaman* 2, no. 1 (2020): 72–85, <https://doi.org/10.53563/ai.v2i1.33>.

¹² Ima Fitri Sholichah Lailatuz Zahroh, "Pengaruh Konsep Diri Dan Regulasi Diri Terhadap Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) Pada Mahasiswa Pengguna Instagram," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Konseling* 4, no. 3 (2022): 1103–9.

¹³ Otniel Binsar Purba, Andik Matulesy, and Sayyidah Aulia Ul Haque, "Fear Of Missing Out Dan Psychological Well-Being Dalam Menggunakan Media Sosial," *Sukma: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi* 2, no. 01 (2021): 42–51.

¹⁴ Elyna Norma, Amalia Savitri, and Titin Suprihatin, "Peran Kontrol Diri Dan Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) Terhadap Kecenderungan Adiksi Media Sosial Pada Generasi Z Yang Berstatus Mahasiswa," *PSISULA: Prosiding Berkala Psikologi* 3 (2021): 336–46.

¹⁵ Nicho Alinton Sianipar, Dian Veronika, and Sakti Kaloeti, "Hubungan Antara Regulasi Diri Dengan Fear Of Missing Out (FoMO) Pada Mahasiswa Tahun Pertama Fakultas Psikologi Universitas Diponegoro," *Jurnal Empati* 8, no. 1 (2019): 136–43.

¹⁶ Siregar, "Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) Dalam Al-Qur'an." p. 4

(*Nafsiologi*) to highlight differing perspectives on the structure of the human mind.¹⁷ Furthermore, research by Mushodiq and Saputra examined the dynamics of personality in Islam through the concepts of *Ammārah*, *Lawwāmah*, and *Muṭma'innah*, then compared them with the structure of the id, ego, and superego.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Nur Hadi explored Ibn Sina's view of the as a separate, eternal substance whose function is to perfect the body.¹⁹

In comparison, previous research can be broadly divided into two main trends: (i) modern psychological studies emphasizing the role of self-control in managing FOMO, and (ii) Islamic-influenced research focusing on personality structure and spiritual solutions. However, no study has directly linked scholars' interpretations of the Quranic verses about the to the specific phenomenon of FOMO in the digital age. This gap is precisely what this research aims to fill: to offer an integrative approach by connecting the dynamics of *Ammārah*, *Lawwāmah*, and *Muṭma'innah* with the symptoms of FOMO, while simultaneously formulating solutions based on a Quranic perspective.

This research aims to first explain the ulama's interpretation of the verses (*Ammārah*, *Lawwāmah*, and *Muṭma'innah*) as a basis for understanding the dynamics of the human soul. From this framework, the study will link the teachings of the Qur'an with the FOMO phenomenon in the digital era to establish the relationship between the Qur'anic text and the psychological behavior of modern society. Additionally, this research offers Qur'an-based solutions that can help individuals manage anxiety and the negative impacts of FOMO, thereby demonstrating the ongoing relevance of Qur'anic values to contemporary life issues.

METHODS

This research employs a library research methodology, relying solely on literature sources as the primary basis for exploring and constructing scientific arguments about the object of study.²⁰ This method does not involve direct field data collection. Instead, it gathers information from books, academic journals, articles, documents, and other relevant written sources. Data acquisition in this study is based on systematic literature searches, critical and comprehensive reading, and an in-depth analysis of various ideas, theories, and previous findings.²¹ Interpretations will be examined through the works of both classical scholars (e.g., al-Tabari, al-Zamakhsyari) and contemporary scholars (e.g., Wahbah az-Zuhaili, Quraish Shihab)

¹⁷ Syaiful Hamali, "Kepribadian Dalam Teori Sigmund Freud Dan Nafsiologi Dalam Islam," *Al-Adyan* 13, no. 2 (2018): 285–302.

¹⁸ Muhamad Agus Mushodiq and Andika Ari Saputra, "Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy," *Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy* 3, no. 1 (2021): 38, <https://doi.org/10.51214/bocp.v3i1.49><https://journal.kurasinstitute.com/index.php/bocp/article/view/49><https://journal.kurasinstitute.com/index.php/bocp>.

¹⁹ Nur Hadi Ihsan, Nadaa Afifah Silmi, and Sayyid Muhammad Indallah, "Konsep Nafs Dalam Perspektif Ibnu Sina: Pembuktian Logis Terhadap Keberadaan Jiwa," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 7, no. 2 (2024): 263–78.

²⁰ Ulya, *Metode Penelitian Tafsir* (Kudus: Nora Media Enterprise, 2010), pp. 5-7

²¹ Sukardi, *Metodologi Penelitian Pendidikan: Kompetensi Dan Praktiknya* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2010).

to obtain a comprehensive cross-era perspective. The overall approach is qualitative, which aims to understand and systematically explain a phenomenon, event, or social reality in depth.²²

In the study of interpretation, this research employs the (thematic) interpretation method. This approach involves interpreting the Qur'an by defining the scope of a specific theme.²³ Using this method, the main theme—the *nafs*—is first determined. Researchers then collect verses that explicitly address the dynamics of the human soul, specifically QS. Yusuf 12:53 (concerning *nafs al-Ammārah*), QS. Al-Qiyamah 75:2 (concerning *nafs al-Lawwāmah*), and QS. Al-Fajr 89:27 (concerning *nafs al-Muṭma'innah*). These three verses are selected because commentators consistently refer to them as the key categories in discussions of the human soul, allowing them to form a complete understanding of the Qur'an's perspective on the study theme.²⁴

The research analysis is conducted in three stages: Exploration of scholars' interpretations of the verses on the (self-centeredness). Mapping of FOMO symptoms based on modern psychological literature. Integration of the two findings to establish common ground: how the verses on the can explain the FOMO phenomenon while simultaneously offering a Qur'anic solution. This final step ensures the research is not only descriptive but also analytical-integrative, thereby demonstrating the Qur'an's contribution to contemporary psychological issues.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

1. Interpretation of the Nafs Verses and Their Relevance to the FOMO Phenomenon

The Qur'an mentions the word in sixteen distinct forms, each carrying a specific meaning and intent based on its context. The root word, *nafs*, appears sixty-one times throughout the Qur'an.²⁵ Three particular verses linguistically address the dynamics of the human personality, and these three concepts are interrelated: *nafs al-Ammārah* in QS. Yusuf 12:53, *nafs al-Lawwāmah* in QS. Al-Qiyamah 75:2, and *nafs al-Muṭma'innah* in QS. Al-Fajr 89:27.

A. Nafs al-Ammarah,

﴿ وَمَا أُبْرِيْ نَفْسِيْ اِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوْءِ اِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّيْ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ٥٣ ﴾

And I do not acquit myself. Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful." (Yusuf/12:53)

²² Lembaga Dr. Supaat. dkk, Penjaminan Mutu, and (LPM) IAIN KUDUS, "Pedoman Penyelesaian Tugas Akhir Program Sarjana (Skripsi)," 2019, 1-167.

²³ Abdul Hayy Farmawi, *Metode Tafsir Maudhu'i Dan Cara Penerapannya*, Terj. Rosihon Anwar (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2002).

²⁴ Abdul Mustaqim, *Metode Penelitian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2014), p. 109

²⁵ Muhammad Fu'ad Abdul-Baqi., *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mufahras Li Alfadh Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* (Kairo: Darul Hadist, 1996), pp. 802-7

The word *Ammārah* in this verse follows the *wazan fa'aal*, which denotes *sighat Mubālaghah* (excessiveness).²⁶ In Quraish Shihab's interpretation of Surah Yusuf, verse 53, scholars hold differing views regarding who originally uttered the verse: 1) According to al-Biqâ'i, this statement is a continuation of the words of Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him). After previously clarifying his own position, Yusuf emphasizes that he does not intend to claim purity from wrongdoing. Humans fundamentally possess desires that lean toward evil, and no one can be saved from that urge unless Allah grants protection and guidance. Thus, this reflects Yusuf's humility, his acknowledgment of human weakness, and his gratitude that Allah continually protected him from temptation. 2) Ibn Kathir and Muhammad Sayyid Thanthawi understand the verse as a continuation of the words of al-'Aziz's wife. After acknowledging that Yusuf was a righteous person, she continues by admitting she could not free herself from sin. Desire constantly whispers a call to do bad, which is why she attempted to tempt Yusuf and later accused him. This statement expresses her regret and admission that her lustful impulse led her to act, rather than any guilt on Yusuf's part.²⁷ Despite these differing opinions on the speaker, both interpretations agree on one core teaching: humans possess a tendency toward lust that leads to evil, and only God's protection can save them from succumbing to it.

Wahba az-Zuhaili, in his *Tafsir Al-Munir*, defines the as a natural tendency toward lust that issues many commands. The term "anger" (*Ammārah*, refers to *nafs al-Ammārah*) in this context signifies a strong inclination toward desire, one that requires control, supervision, and constant vigilance.²⁸ This interpretation aligns with At-Tabari's view that the human soul dictates that it follow its desires without considering morality or social reality. In this case, God's intervention governs the human soul through the granting of grace, thereby saving individuals from succumbing to lustful desires.²⁹ Meanwhile, Zamakhsari stated that is a basic human desire. This means it is a universal human impulse that drives people to fulfill all their wishes without considering applicable law.³⁰

B. Nafs al-Lawwamah

وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ ۚ (القيامة/75: 2)

And I swear by the reproaching soul [to the certainty of resurrection]. (Al-Qiyamah/75:2)

The Qur'an mentions the word *Lawwāmah* in Surah Al-Qiyamah, verse 2, right after swearing by the Day of Judgment. Linguistically, the term comes from an old

²⁶ Nasiruddin Abi Sa'id Al-Baidhawi, *Tafsir Baidhawi* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1988), Vol 3, p. 167

²⁷ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2006).

²⁸ Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir Fil 'Aqidah Was Syari'ah Wal Manhaj Jilid 7* (Damaskus: Darul Fikr, 2007), p. 7

²⁹ Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, *Jami' Al- Bayan an Ta'wil Ay Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 2000), p. 142

³⁰ Abu al-Qasim Mahmud ibn Umar Al-Zamakhsyari, *Tafsir Al-Kasyaf* (Beirut: Dar al-Marefah, 2009), Vol 2, pp. 408-410

root meaning to criticize.³¹ Jalāluddīn as-Suyūṭī, in his book *Ad-Durr al-Manṭūr fī at-Tafsīr al-Ma'thūr*, compiled various accounts from earlier exegetes regarding the meaning of nafs al-Lawwāmah. Among these accounts is a narration from Qatādah (via Ibn Ḥamīd and Ibn Jarīr) stating that Allah swears by the soul that blames itself for both good and evil. Furthermore, from Ibn 'Abbās (via Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, and others), the soul is referred to simply as "the soul that blames" or "the soul that regrets." Another narration attributed to Ibn 'Abbās explains that this soul regrets both good and bad deeds, even saying, "If only I had done this and that."³² At-Tabari concluded from various scholars that *al-Lawwāmah* in this verse can be interpreted as a desire that criticizes both good and bad actions, or a desire that criticizes past deeds and feels regret.³³ Zamakhsari is of the view that *Lawwāmah* is a good passion (*muttaqiyah*) that is still mixed with negative passions.³⁴

In a similar thought, Wahba az-Zuhaili interprets *Lawwāmah* as the soul that criticizes itself, even when it has strived to be obedient and kind.³⁵ Quraish Shihab quoted a narration from Hasan al-Basri, who said: "The believer—by Allah—you do not find him except criticizing himself (and always saying: 'What do I want from my words? What do I mean by my food? What do I aim at from the whispers of my heart?'). Meanwhile, the disobedient passes away without ever criticizing or regretting himself."³⁶

Based on the various scholarly interpretations discussed, *al-Lawwāmah* can be understood as standing at the bridge between instinct and morality. It acts as an intermediary, channeling human desires while remaining limited by rational considerations. Essentially, it serves an evaluative function operating between the actions and reactions of the human subconscious. The dynamics of the soul will always fluctuate according to the conditions of *al-Ammārah*, which continuously guides its owner to follow their desires, while *al-Lawwāmah* functions to filter between good and bad desires. Regret and condemnation can be expressed by both the obedient and the disobedient. If one regrets an act of disobedience, one will be saved. Conversely, if one regrets an act of goodness, one will be doomed.

C. Nafs al-Muṭma'innah

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ۚ ۲۷ (الفجر/89: 27)

[To the righteous it will be said], "O reassured soul, (Al-Fajr/89:27)

The word *Muṭma'innah* comes from the word *iṭma'anna*, it is generally interpreted as tranquility and calmness. At-Tabari interprets QS. Al-Fajr 89:27 as describing a soul that is calm and fully believes in the promises of Allah, as assured to those who have faith.³⁷ Abu Hafsh, in his book *at-Taysir fī at-Tafsir*, defines it as one

³¹ Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, p. 526-9

³² Jalāl al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr Al-Manṭūr Fī Al-Tafsīr Bi Al-Ma'thūr.*, Vol. 4 (Beirut: Darul Fikr, 1993).

³³ Ath-Thabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan an Ta'wil Ay Al-Qur'an*, pp. 223-5

³⁴ Al-Zamakhsyari, *Tafsir Al-Kasyaf*, Vol 4, p. 746

³⁵ Wahbah Az-Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir Fil 'Aqidah Was Syari'ah Wal Manhaj Jilid 15* (Damaskus: Darul Fikr, 2007), p. 271

³⁶ Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah Pesan, Kesan, Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*.

³⁷ Ath-Thabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan an Ta'wil Ay Al-Qur'an*, p. 558

who obeys Allah's commands and trusts in His promises. In the book *Fathul Bayan fii Maqashid al-Qur'an*, the passion is described as one who is calm and certain of their faith and the oneness of Allah, achieving a tranquility that is unmixed with doubt and unassailed by hesitation.³⁸ This calm soul or desire acts as a crucial control against the urge of the passion. Through the role of the passion, humans can achieve peace of mind and prosperity in this world and the hereafter.³⁹

2. Overview of the Fear of Missing Out Phenomenon

Fear of Missing Out, commonly abbreviated as FOMO, refers to a feeling of anxiety or worry that one will miss out on an interesting experience, event, or opportunity happening elsewhere.⁴⁰ The term was first introduced by Patrick J. McGinnis in an article titled "Social Theory at HBS: McGinnis' Two FOs." This piece was published in 2004 in *The Harbus*, the student newspaper of Harvard Business School (HBS), while McGinnis was still a student there. He wrote the article based on his observations that many of his friends, including himself, frequently felt anxious or worried about missing out on appealing opportunities offered by those around them.

FOMO was initially introduced based on observations of immediate social environments, including friendships, school, and local communities. The subsequent development of social media, which displays real-time activity updates, has led to a significant expansion of FOMO's scope. Anxiety is exacerbated by the ease of accessing social media, enabling people to constantly see the more enjoyable experiences of others.⁴¹ These negative impacts are closely linked to intense psychological shifts within an individual, moving rapidly from worry to joy in a short period of time.

According to McGinnis's observations, the anxiety caused by FOMO has been a part of the human condition for a long time, and the development of information technology has only exacerbated its impact. This is because humans naturally seek inclusion and try to avoid exclusion at all costs. Furthermore, perceptions within the human mind play a significant role in influencing this anxiety.⁴² A person who believes that other people's activities are better and considers their own life less enjoyable will trigger anxiety stimuli, even if they aren't aware of whether what they see is actually true.⁴³ Thus, two main factors cause the emergence of Fear of Missing Out: (i) the perception that you are missing out on something better happening at

³⁸ Shiddiq Hasan Khan, *Fathul Bayan Fii Maqashid Al-Qur'an*, Vol 15 (Beirut: Maktabah al-'Ishriyyah, 1992), p. 232

³⁹ Muhamad Agus Mushodiq and Ari Saputra, "Bull. Couns. Psychother."

⁴⁰ McGinnis, *The FOMO Sapiens Handbook*.

⁴¹ Haidar Idris, Ahmad Ihwanul Muttaqin, and Akhmad Afnan Fajarudin, "Fenomena Fomo; Pandangan Al-Qur'an Tentang Pendidikan Mental Dan Keseimbangan Kehidupan Generasi Millennial," *Tarbiyatuna* 16 (2023): 145-57.

⁴² McGinnis, *The FOMO Sapiens Handbook*.

⁴³ Andrew K Przybylski et al., "Motivational, Emotional, and Behavioral Correlates of Fear of Missing Out," *Computers in Human Behavior* 29, no. 4 (2013): 1841-48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.02.014>.

the moment, and (ii) the desire to be part of the group experience and to avoid being excluded from that group.

Anxiety is an individual's internal turmoil that cannot be seen or felt except by the person experiencing it. Although anxiety is an invisible part of the human psyche, its symptoms can be measured through specific behavioral indicators.⁴⁴ In *The FOMO Sapiens Handbook*, McGinnis created indicators in the form of human behavioral examples to determine how effectively a person manages themselves when facing this anxiety. The indicators include:

1. Feeling anxious if other people are doing better activities.
2. Feeling anxious if friends are doing better activities.
3. Feeling worried when you discover your friends are having fun without you.
4. Feeling anxious when you don't know what your friends are doing.
5. Believing it's important to understand a friend's joke.
6. Sometimes worrying about spending time following what's going on.
7. Missing a meeting with friends is a real bummer.
8. Sharing something fun is very important.
9. Missing an appointment is a pain.
10. Keeping track of my friends' activities even when I'm on vacation.

A person falls into the FOMO Sapiens category if they exhibit these indicators and are deemed to require follow-up to maintain their psychological stability.

3. Self-Control as the Meeting Point of the Nafs Concept and Psychology

In psychology literature, self-control (or self-regulation) is defined as an individual's ability to direct their thoughts, emotions, and behavior to align with long-term goals.⁴⁵ Baumeister and colleagues emphasize that self-control functions to limit momentary, harmful impulses, allowing individuals to delay gratification for more valuable outcomes.⁴⁶ In the context of the FOMO phenomenon, several studies confirm that low self-control correlates with increased anxiety, excessive social media use, and feelings of self-dissatisfaction. Conversely, individuals with high levels of self-control tend to be more selective in absorbing information and more resilient to digital social pressure.

In the Islamic tradition, the Qur'an similarly emphasizes the importance of self-control through the concept of the nafs. Nafs al-Ammārah describes impulsive drives that always lead to instinctive behavior, while nafs al-Lawwāmah acts as a corrective that encourages individuals to re-evaluate their life choices. At a higher level, nafs al-Muṭma'innah signifies a calm inner state achieved by successfully subduing negative impulses and directing the soul toward obedience to Allah. Wahbah az-Zuhaili, in his

⁴⁴ Przybylski et al., "Fear of Missing Out Scale: FoMOs," *Computers in Human Behavior* 29 (2013): 1840.

⁴⁵ Ramadona Dwi Marsela and Mamat Supriatna, "Kontrol Diri: Definisi Dan Faktor," *Journal of Innovative Counseling: Theory, Practice & Research* 3, no. 2 (2019): 65-69, http://journal.umtas.ac.id/index.php/innovative_counseling.

⁴⁶ Roy F. Baumeister, Kathleen D. Vohs, and Dianne M. Tice, "The Strength Model of Self-Control," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 16, no. 6 (2007): 351-55, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2007.00534.x>.

Tafsir al-Munir, stresses that nafs al-Ammārah describes the strong human urge toward lust and instinctive impulses that must be controlled. This understanding aligns with the function of self-control in psychology, which seeks to restrain impulsive behavior so it doesn't harm the individual.⁴⁷ This pattern demonstrates that the Qur'anic text paid attention to the mechanisms of human internal control from the outset, even if the terminology differs from modern psychology.

The similar emphasis between psychology and Qur'anic interpretation lies in the function of controlling impulsive urges. While psychology explains self-control primarily in terms of behavior and emotions, the Qur'an emphasizes the spiritual and moral dimensions. Crucially, both converge on a common point: individuals require internal mechanisms to maintain balance amidst external pressures. Therefore, comparing the psychological literature on self-control with the concept of the Nafs in the Qur'an is not an attempt to force a match, but rather to find common ground in understanding the dynamics of the human soul.

This explanation also serves as a bridge to an integrative discussion of FOMO. The FOMO phenomenon can be viewed as a failure to control impulsive urges (aligning with Ammārah), as well as an opportunity to cultivate self-reflection (Lawwāmah) and seek inner peace (Muṭma'innah). Furthermore, Przybylski et al. found that FOMO primarily occurs in individuals with unmet psychological needs and weak self-control, making them more susceptible to social anxiety.⁴⁸ These findings further confirm that the Qur'anic concept of the self can serve as a relevant framework for understanding and addressing the phenomenon of FOMO in the digital age. Thus, self-control is key, both in psychological discourse and within the Qur'anic framework, to explaining and addressing the digital anxiety that arises in the social media era.

4. Integrating the Concept of Nafs with the FOMO Phenomenon

After presenting the ulama's interpretation of the nafs verses (Ammārah, Lawwāmah, and Muṭma'innah) alongside a general description of the FOMO phenomenon from the perspective of modern psychology, it's crucial to examine the relationship between the two. The Qur'an describes the nafs as the multi-layered dynamics of the human soul, spanning from impulsive drives and self-criticism to calmness. Meanwhile, FOMO is a psychological phenomenon arising from social anxiety in the digital era, often characterized by impulsive behavior, feelings of restlessness, and a search for inner peace.

A clear correspondence emerges when the two concepts are compared. The destructive nature of FOMO, characterized by impulsive tendencies and the uncontrollable urge to follow others, shares striking similarities with the characteristic of the nafs al-Ammārah (the commanding soul). Furthermore, the anxiety that FOMO evokes, which simultaneously encourages self-reflection, aligns with the characteristic of the nafs al-Lawwāmah (the self-reproaching soul). Ideally, the peace of mind offered by the nafs al-Muṭma'innah (the contented soul) can serve

⁴⁷ Az-Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir Fil 'Aqidah Was Syari'ah Wal Manhaj Jilid 15*.

⁴⁸ Przybylski et al., "Motivational, Emotional, and Behavioral Correlates of Fear of Missing Out."

as an antidote to the excessive anxiety caused by FOMO and provide a healthier direction for social media use. This integration of psychological and Qur'anic concepts yields several concrete steps:

a. The Control Phase (Aligning with Nafs al-Ammarah)

Build self-awareness by limiting social media time as a form of controlling impulsive urges (aligned with Ammārah). You can do this by utilizing the screen timer found in your device or application settings. The aim here is to restrain the impulsive drives that arise from social media exposure. The Ammārah is a basic human impulse that needs to be controlled so that it doesn't lead to negative outcomes like depression.

b. The Reflection Phase (Aligning with Nafs al-Lawwamah)

Turn feelings of anxiety or envy arising from others' activities into reflection, rather than just a self-defeating social comparison. Instead of comparing your accomplishments to others or striving to meet social media standards, journaling can be used as a coping strategy. This involves writing down things that make you anxious on social media and then transforming those feelings into personal goals (for example, instead of envying others' achievements, use them as inspiration to learn or work better). The goal is to transform feelings of anxiety or envy into energy for self-improvement. This perfectly aligns with the role of Lawwamah, which guides you to evaluate your choices.

c. The Tranquility Phase (Aligning with Nafs al-Muṭma'innah)

Strengthening spiritual aspects such as dzikr (remembrance of God), prayer, and meditation helps the soul achieve a state of complete tranquility that won't be easily shaken by the false standards of social media. The objective is to foster inner stability so you aren't swayed by the digital world's false metrics. Spiritual awareness serves as a compass or indicator for your interactions with other humans and with God.

Through these steps, readers are encouraged to see that Qur'anic solutions aren't limited to theory but can be directly applied to addressing everyday digital anxiety. The formulation of these solutions demonstrates that FOMO is not merely a psychological issue; it also reflects the dynamics of the soul. Crucially, the Qur'an provides a framework that not only explains the symptoms but also offers practical and spiritual solutions that anyone can apply immediately.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the verses in the Qur'an shows that the concepts of nafs al-Ammārah, Lawwamah, and Muṭma'innah represent the multi-layered dynamics of the human soul, moving from instinctive impulses to self-control and inner peace. Both classical and contemporary interpretations emphasize that this process of control is key to forming a healthy personality.

Crucially, this study demonstrates that the verses—particularly Ammārah, Lawwamah, and Muṭma'innah—provide a relevant framework for understanding the phenomenon of FOMO in the digital age. The integration of Qur'anic concepts with psychological findings results in three interrelated phases: Nafs al-Ammārah can be

understood as impulsive urges that align with the compulsive behavior caused by social media, such as anxiety about missing out on trends or an excessive urge to stay connected. Nafs al-Lawwāmah represents a mechanism of reflection, similar to self-regulation, which occurs when individuals realize the negative impact of FOMO and begin to evaluate their behavior. Nafs al-Muṭma'innah describes a calm and balanced inner state, serving as the ideal model for individuals seeking to deal with the psychological pressures of the digital world.

From this integration, we can conclude that the Qur'an offers a highly relevant conceptual framework for understanding the FOMO phenomenon in the digital age. The spiritual values contained in the Qur'anic verses don't just explain the internal dynamics of humans normatively; they also provide a practical foundation that aligns well with modern psychological findings. This study ultimately confirms the contribution of integrating *tafsir* (exegesis) and psychology studies in interpreting social phenomena in the digital age, while simultaneously opening up opportunities for more applied follow-up research.

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