

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This section presents the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and definitions of key terms.

A. Background of the Research

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has become one of the most discussed social phenomena in the digital era. FoMO refers to the feeling worried and uneasy when they missing out on experiences, events, or opportunities that others have. It reflects a concern about the chance of being left out on important events. Przybylski et al. (2013) define FoMO as when individual felt they missing out an experience that others might have. In today's world social media is the main reason person experienced FoMO (Piko et al., 2025).

Social media users in Indonesia increased in 2023 with 167 million users and the 153 million users were over the age of 18, or 79.5% of the total population. This number has increased than previous years, and this will increase in the coming years. Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create share, exchange and comment contents among themselves in virtual communities and networks (Chakrabarti, 2024). These days social media is necessary for people because of the rapidly development of time and technology, many jobs and industries use and need social media in the work process. In current situations, the number of users is mostly dominated with gen z.

Generation Z, also known as Gen Z, refers to people who were born and grew up in the digital era. Researchers and popular media use the mid to late 1990s

as the initial year of birth and the early 2010s as the final year of birth for Gen Z. However, the classification of the birth year range for Gen Z or Generation Z used in Indonesia starts from 1997–2012 (Fitria, 2023). According to the results of the 2020 Population Census by the *Badan Pusat Statistik* (BPS), generation Z-born between 1997 and 2012-reaches approximately 75.49 million people or 27.94% of Indonesia's total population. This age group includes individuals aged 13 to 28 in 2025, which is the age range of junior high school, high school, and college students. Gen Z is often referred to as digital natives because they grew up surrounded by technology and are highly engaged with the internet and social media. Gen Z is considered the most vulnerable to experience FoMO because they are highly connected to technology and social media in their daily lives. Through social media, Gen z uses social media to build their social identity or personal branding.

However, social media exposure to people's achievements, lifestyles, and appearances can lead individuals to reflect on themselves and start making comparisons. This causes to social comparison which they evaluate themselves in others. This is in line with the concept of social comparison from Festinger (1954) social comparison is when an individual compares themselves to others and evaluate their opinions and abilities. Social comparison often leads to FoMO, when a person feels uneasy and worried when they cannot experience what others have (Piko et al., 2025; Tandon et al., 2021).

Current studies revealed that FoMO phenomenon is not only in mental health's topics but also in social life and society's expectations. FoMO leads people how to behave, cooperate, and grow as individuals. In social perception, this phenomenon increases social competition and triggers a pressure for people to always be seen as successful person (Yildirimer and Yentür, 2024). Too much exposure of people's achievements in social media often causes individuals to comparing themselves to others results to feel dissatisfaction and tiredness. Being offline in this advanced digital era able to make a person felt left out because they missing of what is happening in the world (Tandon et al., 2021). Therefore, FoMO is seen as a result of modern digital culture and is closely related to higher levels of anxiety, depression, lower academic performance, and weaker real-life social interactions (Gokul and C. 2023).

Not only in real life, in movies we can see this more completely through the combination of visual, verbal, and emotional elements. Movies allow audiences to observe how FoMO is represented not only through dialogue or storyline, but also through characters' expressions, behaviors, and interactions. Dave and Richard, (2021) explain that movie is media created by skilled artists and technicians to express meaning and emotion through images. People consider that movie only for entertainment. However, Hall (1997) states that movies also influence and portray how society thinks and behaves then represent it through movie or media, sometimes movie portray cultural and social phenomena that is happening. Furthermore, movie is precisely chosen as medium to uncover the FoMO phenomena.

The movie chosen is *Ron's Gone Wrong*, a 2021 animated science fiction comedy produced by Locksmith Animation and 20th Century Studios, directed by Sarah Smith and Jean-Philippe Vine, and written by Smith and Peter Baynham. The voice cast includes Jack Dylan Grazer, Zach Galifianakis, Ed Helms, Justice Smith, Rob Delaney, Kylie Cantrall, Ricardo Hurtado, and Olivia Colman. It is rated PG (Parental Guide) for thematic elements, rude humor, and language, making it suitable for children and teenagers. The movie, rated 7.1 on IMDb, falls under the genres of animation, comedy, and science fiction.

The story is set in a fictional world where a tech company launches the B-Bot, a digital friend designed to help children socialize through internet connection and personalized data. The plot follows Barney Pudowski, a socially awkward middle school student who is the only one without a B-Bot. When he finally gets one, his robot, Ron, turns out to be defective and does not follow the usual programmed rules.

Through Barney's experience, the movie explores themes of social pressure, digital dependence, social isolation, and the desire to belong, which relate to the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Barney's feeling of being left behind highlights the emotional impact of being excluded from technological trends and social interactions. The movie reflects the reality of Gen Z, who often experience FoMO in a world shaped by social media, online validation, and constant digital connection.

Previous studies about movie representation have been mainly focused on movie using semiotic analysis. Some of the findings analyzed the gender

representation Susanti et al. 2022; Wardah and Kusuma (2022) discussed the women representation and feminism in the movie. Meanwhile Dewayani and Azwar (2024) explored the gender equality, while other researchers examined different aspects such as cultural representation of Chinese culture (Liani et al., 2024), social class (Dianiya, 2020), and human values (Anggoro et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, studies focusing on the representation of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) are still limited. A study by Kornelia C et al. (2024) analyzed a Samsung advertisement using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory and found ten scenes representing FoMO. These representations were shown through denial, hallucination, and decision-making as ways of achieving a sense of comfort and peace. In addition, Hidayah and Nur (2024) examined the representation of FoMO and its moral (dakwah) messages in the animated series *Ibra Episode 10* using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory. Their findings revealed seven scenes representing FoMO, which also contained moral messages.

However, most existing studies about representation have focused on gender, culture, morality, and social class, while studies on the representation of FoMO in advertisements and animated series has also been examined. As a result, research on the representation of FoMO in movies remains limited. Furthermore, previous FoMO research has mainly examined psychological and behavioral aspects. Therefore, the representation of FoMO in *Ron's Gone Wrong*, particularly in relation to technology and digital interaction, remains underexplored.

This study offers new insight by examining how FoMO is represented through signs and meanings using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, connecting it to

Gen Z's social behavior and the influence of digital culture that drives this phenomenon. Therefore, analyzing *Ron's Gone Wrong* becomes relevant because the movie directly presents digital pressure, social exclusion, and comparison with others through technology that shape FoMO among young audiences.

To uncover how FoMO represented in this movie, semiotic analysis is utilized. Semiotic is a study about signs and symbols to explore deeper messages through visual and audiovisual elements (Behera, 2024). In this research, Roland Barthes's semiotic theory is applied, which examine meaning through denotation (literal meaning), connotation (cultural or emotional meaning), and myth (the broader cultural meaning behind the sign). Through semiotic analysis, this study seeks to uncover how digital culture constructs ideas of connection, belonging, and exclusion that reflect the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Barthes' semiotic enables the interpretation of signs embedded within the movie's visual and narrative elements. By revealing how these meanings are constructed across the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth, this research fills a gap and demonstrates how media naturalizes FoMO as part of modern social life.

In conclusion, this movie was chosen because it clearly illustrates how technology and social media influence how Gen Z interacts with and experiences the world. The movie represents FoMO through its characters, showing their behaviors when they cannot have or experience what others have, similar to what Gen Z often faces today. Therefore, this study aims to reveal how FoMO is represented in the movie *Ron's Gone Wrong* through Barthes' semiotic analysis. The purpose of this study is to identify visual and narrative signs in the movie that reflect the social reality of Generation Z's behavior in the context of digital culture.

Based on this background, the following research questions were formulated to guide the analysis.

B. Research Questions

From the described background above, the problems of this research are:

1. What are the signs that represent the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in *Ron's Gone Wrong* movie?
2. What are the denotative, connotative, and myth meanings that represent the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in *Ron's Gone Wrong* movie based on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory?

C. Research Objectives

Based from the research questions the objectives of the research are:

1. To find the signs that represent the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in *Ron's Gone Wrong* movie.
2. To find the denotative, connotative, and myth meanings of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in *Ron's Gone Wrong* movie through semiotics analysis of Roland Barthes Theory.

D. Significance of The Research

This research is expected to give several benefits:

1. Social significance

Explain the impact of social media and technology on teenagers' social pressure and anxiety.

2. Practical significance

To serve as a reference for educators, and parents in understanding the impact of social media on Gen Z's social development.

3. Educational significance

To provides an academic reference on how movies may be used as learning media to discuss social phenomena related to digital culture.

E. Scope of the Research

The scope of this study is only analyzed of how FoMO presented in the movie and not analyze from real-life data, interviews, surveys, or psychological assessments of actual individuals. The focus of this analysis only on the movie scenes.

F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)

FoMO is a feeling when individuals cannot experience what others have and it cause them excluded with others.

2. Social Comparison

Social comparison happens when individuals start to evaluate themselves then comparing them with others from lives, opinions, and abilities.

3. *Ron's Gone Wrong*

Ron's Gone Wrong (2021) is an animated movie science fiction comedy movie produced by Locksmith Animation in partnership with 20th Century Studios.

The movie is rated PG (Parental Guidance) for some thematic elements, rude humor, and language, making it suitable for children and teenager.