

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA
USAGE AND ANXIETY LEVELS AMONG FINAL-
YEAR STUDENTS IN THE DIGITAL ERA AT
SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY**

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationship between social media usage and anxiety levels among final-year students at Sriwijaya University in the digital era. As a global phenomenon, social media significantly impacts individual psychology, particularly students facing academic pressure and the transitional phase of emerging adulthood. Employing a quantitative approach with Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis, the findings reveal a significant positive correlation between social media usage and anxiety levels. The analysis is grounded in emerging adulthood developmental theory, social stress theory, and the concept of digital self-presentation. These findings underscore the critical importance of digital literacy and mental health management for students in the age of social media.

Keywords: Social Media, Anxiety, Final-Year Students, Emerging Adulthood, Digital Era

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital technology, especially social media, has revolutionized how humans communicate and interact socially. Students, as a youthful demographic highly adaptive to technological evolution, tend to utilize social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok for social interaction and daily information needs. However, while social media serves as an effective communication medium, it can also pose mental health risks, particularly via the development of anxiety related to intensive use.

According to Arnett (2004), final-year students are in the emerging adulthood phase—a transitional period from adolescence to young adulthood—during which individuals are vulnerable to uncertainty, social role confusion, and identity stress. This is compounded by social media behaviors that encourage continuous social comparison, exposure to anxiety-inducing content, and elevated digital expectations for ideal self-presentation (Goffman, 1959, applied in the digital context through self-presentation theory). Consequently, students' psychological well-being faces substantial challenges in this era.

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Robbins and Wilner (2001) further assert that this developmental stage is characterized by negative emotions such as frustration, panic, and stress, which, if unmanaged, may develop into anxiety disorders. Social media usage patterns involving prolonged exposure—considering duration, frequency, attention, and reinforcement of digital content—constitute important variables linked with anxiety that warrant in-depth study.

Aligned with the stress theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which explains how individuals appraise and respond to social pressure, social media acts as a unique stressor for students who perceive viewed content as threats to their social status and academic success. Therefore, this research focuses on elucidating the correlation between the intensity of social media usage and anxiety levels among final-year students at Sriwijaya University in the digital era.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach using a correlational survey method. The sample consisted of 40 final-year students enrolled in the Language Center (UPT Bahasa) at Sriwijaya University, selected through incidental sampling based on criteria of active social media usage and final semester student status.

Research instruments included:

- **Social Media Usage Scale:** Developed by considering dimensions of attention, reinforcement, duration, and frequency. Validity testing confirmed 24 valid items, with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.772, indicating a high degree of reliability (Ghozali, 2018).
- **Anxiety Scale:** Encompassing physical reactions, cognition, motivation, behavior, and mood aspects. Of 30 items, 28 were valid with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.831 (Nunnally, 1978).

Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment correlation tests facilitated by SPSS software. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test indicated a normal data distribution ($p > 0.05$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The correlation test yielded a coefficient of $r = 0.391$ with a significance level of $p = 0.028$ (< 0.05), indicating a significant positive relationship between the intensity of social media usage and anxiety levels among final-year students.

In-depth analysis showed that longer duration and higher frequency of social media access increased the likelihood of students experiencing anxiety. This finding aligns with Ghozali (2018), who suggested that intense social media usage can instigate psychological stress through exposure to negative content, excessive social comparison, and digital dependence. Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory, applied in the social media context, illustrates how individuals construct often idealized and unrealistic online identities, potentially resulting in discrepancies between real and virtual selves that trigger anxiety.

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Additionally, Arnett (2004) describes final-year students in the emerging adulthood phase as psychologically vulnerable to identity confusion and existential anxiety. Coupled with academic pressures and future uncertainties, social media often functions as a "mirror" where students compare themselves to seemingly more successful peers, exacerbating feelings of insecurity and anxiety. Robbins and Wilner (2001) support this by emphasizing that uncontrolled stress during this phase can escalate into serious psychological crises.

From the perspective of Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress theory, maladaptive or exaggerated cognitive appraisals of social media information can generate sustained psychological stress, provoking anxiety. Students with inadequate coping skills are more likely to show elevated anxiety levels as a consequence.

These findings suggest the need for education and stress management interventions, alongside digital literacy training targeted at students—especially during the critical final year of their studies—to promote healthy social media use and prudent information processing that supports mental well-being

CONCLUSION

This research confirms a significant positive correlation between the intensity of social media use and anxiety levels among final-year students at Sriwijaya University. Social media acts as a double-edged sword, serving as both an empowering social tool and a source of mental strain. Developmental and stress theories underscore how social media can either exacerbate or mitigate anxiety depending on users' management strategies.

Practically, these findings underscore the importance of developing digital literacy programs, enhancing coping skills, and providing counseling services focused on anxiety management within the university environment. Future research is recommended to explore moderating factors such as social support and personality traits that may influence the relationship between social media use and anxiety.

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