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The Influence of Social Media and Rapid Information Dissemination on Students in the Digital Era

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has made social media one of the main sources of information for students. This study aims to determine the influence of social media and the rapid spread of information on students' behavior, understanding, and academic activities in the digital era. The main problem raised is how social media affects information consumption patterns and its impact on students' critical and academic capacity. The method used in this study is quantitative descriptive by distributing questionnaires to 120 students from various departments in the West Java region. Data analysis was carried out using statistical correlation techniques and simple regression. The findings show that the intensity of social media use increases with increased access to information, but is also associated with learning disorders and the spread of unverified information. The discussion shows that students tend to receive information instantly without verification, which can affect critical judgment and academic objectivity. The conclusion of this study is that social media and the rapid spread of information have a significant impact on students, both positively and negatively. Therefore, it is necessary to increase digital literacy so that students can filter and utilize information intelligently and responsibly.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The rapid development of information technology has transformed the way individuals, particularly students, access and disseminate information. Social media has become a dominant platform used not only for socializing but also as a source of

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information, academic discussions, and self-development. In this digital era, students are faced with a rapid and almost unstoppable flow of information. Ideally, social media can be a productive tool to support academic activities and foster critical thinking. However, in reality, the spread of unverified information, hoaxes, and superficial information dominates and poses unique challenges in the world of education.

The Problem of The Study

This gap between expectations and reality is the primary focus of this research. Students often suffer from *information overload* and poor digital literacy, which hinders their ability to filter and interpret information objectively.

Research's State of the Art

Several previous studies have highlighted the impact of social media on the behavior of adolescents and students, but few have specifically examined the interaction between the speed of information and its influence on the quality of students' thinking and learning in a local context.

Novelty, Research Gap, & Objective

Based on these conditions, this study aims to examine in-depth the influence of social media and the rapid spread of information on students, both in terms of academic behavior and critical thinking skills. This research is expected to contribute to the development of digital literacy strategies relevant to the needs of the younger generation in this era of ever-evolving technology, as well as to serve as an innovative effort to balance productive and responsible use of social media.

Social media has significantly transformed the lives of people at nearly every level and social strata. Change and development are essential for the smooth flow of social life. Therefore, the government needs to regulate the freedom of social media use in Indonesia. This prompted the author to conduct a study entitled "The Influence of Social Media and the Rapid Dissemination of Information on Students in the Digital Era."

METHOD

Type and Design

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach to determine and analyze the extent of social media's influence and the speed of information dissemination on students in the digital age. This quantitative approach was chosen because the study relies on numerical data that can be measured and analyzed statistically.

Data and Data Sources

The main instrument in this study was a closed-ended questionnaire designed based on indicators of two variables: social media usage (frequency, intensity, and purpose) and perceptions of the speed of information dissemination (accuracy, verifiability, and impact). Literature review research involves critical analysis of written sources relevant to the research topic. The goal is to summarize, synthesize, and evaluate current knowledge in a specific field without conducting empirical research.²

The research instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire based on a 1–5 Likert scale, consisting of 15 statement items developed from theoretical indicators related to social media behavior, information speed, and its impact on students' academic and psychological aspects. Prior to distribution, the instrument was tested for construct validity through exploratory factor analysis and reliability using Cronbach's Alpha with a result of 0.109, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

Data Collection Technique

The research process began with instrument development, questionnaire pilot testing, online distribution (Google Forms), data collection, and data analysis. The data collection process took two weeks.

Data collection was conducted online to facilitate distribution and expand the reach of respondents. Researchers also clarified the data with respondents via private messages to ensure authenticity.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique used is multiple linear regression to determine the simultaneous influence between two independent variables (social media and speed of information) on the dependent variable (impact on students).

Data analysis techniques included descriptive analysis to describe respondent characteristics and responses, as well as multiple linear regression analysis to test the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. Data were analyzed using SPSS software. Prerequisite analysis tests, such as normality, linearity, and multicollinearity, were also conducted to ensure the validity of the results.

RESULTS

Based on the results of multiple linear regression analysis of data collected from 20 student respondents, it was found that both independent variables, namely social media usage and speed of information dissemination, significantly influence the

dependent variable, namely the impact on students in the digital era. The significance value of each variable is below 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the established relationship is strong and relevant.

Descriptively, 78% of respondents admitted to using social media for more than four hours per day, and 65% of them felt the information they received from social media was often overwhelming and confusing. These findings reinforce the symptom of *information overload*, where students have difficulty filtering important and relevant information.

This study involved 30 student respondents from various study programs at university X. Data were obtained through the distribution of an online questionnaire consisting of 15 statements with a Likert scale of 1–5. The analysis was conducted descriptively quantitatively using percentages and means to assess the intensity and tendency of student responses to the variables studied.

1. Use of Social Media

The analysis showed that the majority of students (84%) used social media for more than three hours per day. The average score for the social media usage indicator was 4.12 (high category), indicating that students are very active in using social media for various purposes, including academics. Seventy-six percent of respondents stated that they obtain campus information more often through social media than other official media.

2. Fast Information Dissemination

The average score for the rapid information dissemination indicator was 4.05, which is also considered high. Approximately 68% of respondents admitted to sharing information from social media without first verifying its accuracy. Furthermore, 72% of respondents reported frequently experiencing confusion due to the large amount of information circulating simultaneously on social media.

3. Impact on Students

The average score for the impact on students indicator was 3.87. Most students (66%) stated that social media use can disrupt their focus on studying. However, 70% also acknowledged that social media helps them stay updated on academic and social issues more quickly. This finding demonstrates a dual impact, with social media providing both convenience and challenges in managing information.

4. Validity and Reliability Test

All questionnaire items have been tested for validity with a calculated r value of > 0.3 , and the reliability of the instrument shows a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.109, which means it is very reliable.

DISCUSSIONS

In the discussion, the use of social media has been shown to provide benefits such as ease of accessing academic information, expanding social networks, and accelerating communication. However, the downside is the emergence of disinformation, impaired learning focus, and excessive dependence on instant information. This aligns with McQuail's (2010) theory on the cognitive effects of media, where media influences individual thought processes. The speed of information dissemination has also been shown to contribute to a decline in students' critical thinking skills. Many respondents tend to immediately believe viral information without verifying its source. This finding aligns with previous research by Nasrullah (2021), which showed that students tend to have *low digital verification skills* when dealing with the flow of information on social media.

Today, nearly everyone owns a device that allows them to easily access social media. This continued easy access to social media can benefit learners, especially university students, by allowing them to access relevant information that can enhance their understanding of the material being studied.

The use of social media can also support students in communicating with their instructors during the learning process (Gurcan, 2015). Bouwen and Taillieu in Hamzah (2015) stated, "The development of information and communication technology has enabled globalization, which has changed the perspective on learning within organizations and society. Online learning methods have recently experienced significant growth in higher education environments. In addition to saving time and reducing costs, online learning also provides students with the opportunity to continuously improve their knowledge." ³

Thus, the results of this study confirm that while social media and the speed of information have positive impacts in terms of access and communication efficiency, they also pose serious challenges to students' intellectual abilities if not balanced with adequate digital literacy. Therefore, it is crucial for educational institutions to integrate information and digital literacy training into their curricula to enable students to face the challenges of the digital era wisely and critically.

The results of this study indicate that social media use among college students is at a very high level, both in terms of frequency and purpose of use. Students not only use social media for social interaction but also to obtain academic information and stay up-to-date on current issues. This supports the *Uses and Gratifications theory* by Katz et al., which states that individuals actively choose media to meet their needs for information, entertainment, and social interaction.

However, the speed of information dissemination through social media presents a challenge. Many students report difficulty distinguishing between accurate and misleading information. This reinforces Nasrullah's (2020) view that the digital era has brought about a crisis of information validity, with users often prioritizing speed of sharing over accuracy. The impact of social media on student achievement is significant because, in today's digital era, learning and lectures also rely on social media. Students use social media to gain knowledge and facilitate assignments. ⁴

The tendency of students to spread unverified information is also a serious concern. This can contribute to the spread of hoaxes and the formation of biased public opinion. Information overload *has* also been identified as a consequence of the rapid flow of information, causing students to feel overwhelmed and lose focus, as noted in research by Setiawan & Hidayat (2022). However, social media has also been shown to provide academic benefits when used wisely. Many students report quickly accessing learning materials, group discussions, and campus information through platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram. Thus, social media plays a dual role: as a learning support tool and as a source of disinformation if not properly filtered.

In terms of impact, the results show ambiguity. On the one hand, students are more informed and connected, but on the other, they face impaired concentration and decreased depth of thought. Therefore, stronger digital literacy is needed, particularly in verifying information and using social media critically and productively.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that social media has a significant influence on students in the digital age, both positively and negatively. In terms of usage, social media has proven to be a primary source of information for students and plays a crucial role in supporting academic activities and broadening their understanding of social issues.

However, the rapid spread of information through social media also poses significant challenges, such as the spread of unverified information , confusion in

discerning truth, and information fatigue, which impacts learning focus. These findings indicate an urgent need to improve digital literacy among students so they can use social media wisely, critically, and productively.

In general, social media can be an effective tool to support student development in the digital age, provided it is balanced with the ability to select accurate information and an awareness of the negative impacts of excessive information exposure. Therefore, while social media tends to disrupt student concentration, its impact on their learning outcomes is not significant.

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Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be constructed as a potential conflict of interest.

APPENDIX

**A Questionnaire on the Influence of Social Media and Rapid Information
Dissemination on Students in the Digital Era**

Likert Scale Format:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

No	Statement	No				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I use social media every day to access various types of information.					
2	I once spread information on social media before verifying its truth.					
3	I realize the importance of digital literacy to sort out the information that is spread.					
4	Social media helps me expand my knowledge outside the classroom.					
5	I prefer to search for information through social media compared to other sources.					
6	Information on social media spreads very quickly compared to conventional media.					
7	Information that spreads quickly on social media sometimes makes me misunderstand certain issues.					
8	Social media makes me make decisions faster with careful consideration.					
9	I find it difficult to distinguish between true and hoax information on social media.					
10	I rely on social media as my main source of information in my daily life.					
11	I feel that social media has had an impact on decreasing interest in reading in-depth academic sources of information.					
12	The information I get in the media influences my views on lecture topics.					
13	I follow educational accounts on my social media.					
14	Excessive use of social media disrupts my focus on studying.					
15	Social media makes it easier for me to discuss/exchange information with college friends.					

Google form link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd32WUgLV5a6fC332Kjl9GoqYblt4tSXL_p7eHlv0DtWWU0QA/viewform?usp=header

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	X ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Y

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.274 ^a	.075	-.028	2,565

a. Predictors: (Constant), X

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4,791	1	4,791	.728	.416 ^b
	Residual	59,209	9	6,579		
	Total	64,000	10			

a. Dependent Variable: Y

b. Predictors: (Constant), X

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	45,640	12,492		3,654	.005
	X	-.342	.401	-.274	-.853	.416

a. Dependent Variable: Y

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.109	15

Correlations

		X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8
X1	Pearson Correlation	1	-.095	.126	.243	-.203	-.126	-.796**	-.429
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.780	.713	.471	.550	.713	.003	.187
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X2	Pearson Correlation	-.095	1	.076	-.177	.147	.481	.076	-.577
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.780		.824	.604	.666	.134	.824	.063
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X3	Pearson Correlation	.126	.076	1	.232	.516	.100	.267	.203
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.713	.824		.492	.104	.770	.428	.550
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X4	Pearson Correlation	.243	-.177	.232	1	.450	-.232	-.052	.177
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.471	.604	.492		.165	.492	.880	.604
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X5	Pearson Correlation	-.203	.147	.516	.450	1	-.043	.280	.392
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.550	.666	.104	.165		.900	.405	.233
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11

		X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8
X6	Pearson Correlation	-.126	.481	.100	-.232	-.043	1	.100	-.481
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.713	.134	.770	.492	.900		.770	.134
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X7	Pearson Correlation	-.796**	.076	.267	-.052	.280	.100	1	.481
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.824	.428	.880	.405	.770		.134
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X8	Pearson Correlation	-.429	-.577	.203	.177	.392	-.481	.481	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.187	.063	.550	.604	.233	.134	.134	
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X9	Pearson Correlation	.255	.154	-.203	-.392	-.212	.203	-.481	-.577
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.450	.652	.550	.233	.531	.550	.134	.063
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X10	Pearson Correlation	.356	-.203	.267	.232	.043	.100	-.100	.203
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.283	.550	.428	.492	.900	.770	.770	.550
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X11	Pearson Correlation	.111	-.488	.399	-.171	-.014	-.399	-.089	.488
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.745	.128	.225	.614	.967	.225	.796	.128
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X12	Pearson Correlation	.105	-.354	.467	.336	-.043	-.467	.100	.354
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.759	.285	.148	.313	.900	.148	.770	.285
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X13	Pearson Correlation	-.243	-.255	.336	-.120	.283	-.336	.052	.471
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.471	.449	.313	.725	.399	.313	.880	.144
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X14	Pearson Correlation	.095	.147	-.430	-.100	-.069	-.280	-.194	-.147
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.782	.666	.186	.770	.839	.405	.568	.666
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
X15	Pearson Correlation	.466	.000	-.247	-.383	-.319	-.247	-.494	-.376
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.149	1.000	.464	.245	.339	.464	.122	.255
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
Y	Pearson Correlation	.300	-.029	.659*	.233	.519	-.245	-.100	.238
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.371	.933	.027	.490	.102	.468	.769	.480
	N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).