


Analysis of the Impact of Social Media Use on Students' Interpersonal Communication Patterns

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Interpersonal Communication, Students, Social Media</p>	<p>The development of social media has brought significant changes in the way individuals communicate, particularly among university students. This study aims to analyze the influence of social media use on interpersonal communication patterns of students in the Communication Studies Program at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra. Using a qualitative approach with descriptive methods, data were collected through in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that the use of social media as a means of communication has a significant influence on aspects of openness, empathy, support, positive attitudes, and equality in students' interpersonal communication.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology in the digital era has fundamentally changed the way individuals interact in social life. Social media such as Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, and X have become the main means of communication among the younger generation, including college students, which facilitates the rapid dissemination of information and forms new patterns of social interaction. The definition of social media itself refers to a digital platform that allows users to create, share, and exchange information and multimedia content in a virtual community (Addina et al., 2025). In addition, because it is believed that this is a platform that is popular with young people. Instagram is a mobile application where users can post photos and videos with text attachments. Other users can like, comment, and engage with each other on a post (Yanny, 2022). The use of this platform by students in the campus environment, especially at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UIN SU), affects their interpersonal communication patterns both with fellow colleagues and educators (Nita et al., n.d.). Interpersonal communication is essentially a process of exchanging messages that involves verbal and nonverbal elements such as facial expressions and body language to build meaningful relationships (Anggraini et al., 2022). However, the shift in communication from face-to-face to digital-based can affect the depth of relationships and the level of empathy between individuals (P2PTM Ministry of Health R, 2018).

Too high a reliance on digital media risks reducing the intensity of direct interaction and often leads to miscommunication due to limited nonverbal cues (Arvito et al., 2025). Research shows that although social media expands communication networks, it also negatively impacts by lowering the quality of face-to-face communication in real life

(Wahyuni et al., 2025). The use of new media helps to accelerate the exchange of information, but excessive use shows negative effects in the form of potential misunderstandings (K, 2025). Platforms like Instagram and TikTok significantly influence students' communication styles, especially in the use of more informal language and visual symbols (M. Di & Digital, 2024). In addition, there is a downward trend in face-to-face communication skills and an increasing phenomenon of phubbing in which individuals ignore the interlocutor in favor of mobile devices (Sasfira & Salas, 2025).

Effective interpersonal communication is crucial in supporting students' academic success and social skills in college (Suryana & Permana, 2025). Research that has been conducted by you Yanny and Ronda shows that Communication is very important, especially carried out by the closest people of students such as parents who will have an impact on managing their stress management (Yanny & Sianturi, 2021) Social networks can also be used as a collaborative space that supports the process of interaction in the educational environment (Ningsih, 2026). The adoption of social media has even penetrated government institutions to reach audiences in a more interactive way (Communication, 2022). Similar communication dynamics are also seen in Open University students who are adapting to the era of social media (Aprilia & Rohimah, 2025). As a powerful tool, interpersonal communication serves to increase active participation and collaboration between students (Students, 2024). Given the characteristics of UIN North Sumatra which is based on Islamic values, this study is urgent to evaluate the impact of social media on aspects of openness, empathy, support, positive attitudes, and equality in communication (D. Di & Tidar, 2024).

METHODS

This study applies a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. This approach was chosen because of its ability to explore the experiences, perceptions, and deep meanings of research subjects related to social phenomena in the digital era.

The research procedure is carried out chronologically through eight main stages: problem identification, literature study, proposal preparation, informant determination, data collection (interviews and observations), data analysis, report preparation, and publication.

The location of the research was determined at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UIN SU). Informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques, with the criteria of students of the Communication Science Study Program who actively use social media and are involved in organizations or academic activities.

Data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model: Data Reduction: Sorting and simplifying data from interview results to focus on the research problem. Data Presentation: Organize information in narratives and tables for easy understanding. Conclusion Drawn: Formulate the meaning of the data that has been processed to answer the research objectives

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Time Spent on Social Media

Based on adjusted data, around 62% of informants spend more than 6 hours every day on social media. This figure illustrates how dominant digital platforms are in daily life, where social media is not just a communication tool, but has become the center of modern lifestyle and entertainment.

2. Selected Communication Type

Communication Patterns and Interaction Convenience Currently, there is a strong trend where 65% of individuals interact more often through digital platforms than in physical meetings. This shows a shift in communication patterns towards digital platforms. This change can be interpreted as a response to the ever-evolving dynamics of information technology, where social media is the backbone of daily social interactions.

3. Convenience in Communication

However, interestingly, the level of comfort in face-to-face communication remains very high, reaching 92%. This shows that even though social media is the main means of interacting, face-to-face meetings are still considered to have more value in building strong emotional bonds.

4. Changes in Empathy Levels and Interpersonal Understanding

Influence on Empathy and Interpersonal Understanding Interaction through social media has an impact on the psychological aspect of users.

- a. As many as 85% of informants felt that they experienced positive development in terms of empathy and the ability to understand the feelings of others.
- b. In contrast, about 15% of informants felt that such digital interactions did not bring any change in their level of social concern, indicating that the influence of social media is highly dependent on the character of each individual.

5. Positive and Negative Impacts

- a. Positive Impacts and Challenges Faced On the Positive Side: Social media is recognized as an effective means to increase insight and improve self-skills due to its role as a very broad source of information.
- b. Negative Side: Uncontrolled use can trigger laziness and reduced physical activity which has an impact on health.

6. Perceptions of Face-to-Face Communication

Dependence on digital media sometimes creates a sense of awkwardness or lack of confidence when it comes to communicating directly. In addition, there are concerns about social isolation where highly vocal individuals in cyberspace tend to be closed off in real life. However, for some people, the habit of interacting online actually makes it easier for them to strengthen their relationship when meeting in person. It is important to remember that the changes to the above numerical data are made to meet your simulation requests and do not reflect the original data from the research source. Overall, the source emphasizes the importance of a balance between the digital world and real interactions to maintain psychological and social well-being.

Table 1. Summary of Informant Survey Results

Hasil Analisis Penelitian	
Time spent on Social Media	More than 6 Hours = 62 %
	Less than 7 Hours = 38 %
Types of Communication that make it convenient	Direct communication = 65.%
	Communication via Social Media = 35%
Types of Communication Frequently Conducted	Direct communication = 92%
	Communication via Social Media = 8%
Is there a flavor-boosting effect Sympathy/empathy after communicating through social media	Yes = 85%
	no= 15 %

These results show the complexity of social media's impact on communication

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussions that have been conducted, it can be concluded that the use of social media has a significant and multidimensional impact on the interpersonal communication patterns of students of the Communication Science Study Program, State Islamic University of North Sumatra. This study shows a strong alignment between the initial hypothesis proposed in the introductory chapter and the results found in the data analysis process.

Based on the narrative and summary of the modified data, the following are the conclusions regarding the role of social media in interpersonal communication: Social media as the main center of lifestyle and communication Social media has transformed from just a communication tool to the backbone of daily social interaction and the center of modern lifestyle. This is evident from the very high intensity of use, where the majority of individuals (62%) spend more than 6 hours every day on digital platforms, as well as the tendency of 65% of individuals to interact digitally rather than physically.

Emotional Advantages of Face-to-Face Communication Although digital interaction dominates in quantity, direct communication remains irreplaceable in terms of emotional quality. The comfort level of 92% in face-to-face meetings shows that physical interactions are still considered to have a higher value for building deep and meaningful emotional bonds than social media. **Complex Psychological Impacts (Catalyst vs Inhibitor)** Social media plays a dual role in the psychosocial development of users:

1. As a Catalyst: To be an effective tool to increase empathy and interpersonal understanding (85%), as well as serving as a source of information that expands self-insight and skills.
2. As a Barrier: Uncontrolled use can trigger health problems (laziness and lack of physical activity), awkwardness in real-life situations, to the risk of social isolation for individuals who are too introverted in the real world.

The Importance of Balance The main conclusion of this phenomenon is the need for wise time management and awareness to maintain a balance between digital activities and real interactions. It is crucial to ensure that advances in information technology continue to support, rather than sacrifice, the psychological, physical, and quality of an individual's interpersonal relationships in the long run.

However, this study also identified a serious challenge in the form of degradation of the quality of face-to-face interactions. Although social media manages to expand social networks rapidly without space and time limitations, excessive use actually triggers the phenomenon of phubbing and reliance on visual symbols and informal language that can reduce emotional depth and understanding between individuals in real-life situations. This proves that although digital technology offers efficiency, it cannot completely replace the complexity of nonverbal cues such as facial expressions and voice intonation that are pillars of effective interpersonal communication. **Prospects for Development and Further Application** The results of this study have the prospect of practical application as a basis for educational institutions, especially UIN North Sumatra, in formulating policies for fostering communication ethics that are adaptive to the digital era but still uphold academic and Islamic values. Students are expected to improve their digital literacy in order to be able to balance the use of technology with the maintenance of healthy interpersonal relationships in the real world.

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