



RESEARCH ARTICLE



BALANCING DIGITAL HABITS: INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA FREQUENCY ON COLLEGE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The percentage of social media users has an increasing trend and is problematic from a positive-negative impact perspective. The study aims to reveal the influence of social media frequency and the purpose of accessing social media on the reading comprehension skills of university students. Explanatory quantitative research was applied to 293 samples. The data were collected using questionnaires and objective tests. The results showed that students with moderate social media frequency ($> 3 < 5$ hours) had the best reading comprehension (mean rank: 161.68), while students with low social media frequency (< 3 hours) had the worst reading comprehension (mean rank: 134.55). The purpose of using social media to obtain information was the highest in the low frequency ($n=109$) and medium frequency ($n=77$) groups, while the purpose of obtaining entertainment was the highest in the high frequency group and the purpose of obtaining information took second place. The purpose of accessing information plays a role in the increase of insight that is a supporting factor for the performance of reading comprehension skills. The findings of this study recommend the implementation of digital literacy programs in education with the design of (a) integration in the curriculum, (b) moderate use of social media as a learning strategy, (c) development of usage guidelines, and (d) evaluation and monitoring of social media usage.

Introduction

The percentage of the Indonesian population accessing the internet has increased every year. Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows a graph of the increase in internet users over the period from 2018 to 2022, namely 39.90 percent in 2018, 47.69 percent in 2019, 53.73 percent in 2020, 62.10 percent in 2021, and 66.48 percent in 2022 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). The increase in internet users is caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which implemented remote learning (Hakim et al., 2021; Hasnawati, 2021; Stefanny & Tiara, 2021), the freedom and ease of having smartphones (Hayati, 2018; Zaini & Soenarto, 2019), using the internet as a learning resource (Kurniawan & Rofiah, 2020; Prihatini & Muhid, 2021), and the rising number of social media users (Anwar, 2017; Rahardaya, 2021). These findings confirm that the increase in internet users can be attributed to various factors from both positive and negative perspectives, one of which is social media.

The percentage of internet usage can be classified based on the purpose of access, namely to obtain information or news 74.90 percent, social media 74.02 percent, entertainment 69.79 percent, information on goods/services 20.53 percent, online learning 19.12 percent, purchases 16.51 percent, sending/receiving emails 10.73 percent, financial facilities 6.95 percent, and others 4.87 percent (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). The data shows that internet users have specific purposes for accessing the internet. Social media ranks second most accessed after information retrieval. This creates a problem because social media has both positive and negative impacts (Khairuni, 2016; Nabila & Nabila, 2022; Yuhandra et al., 2021).

The majority of internet users are educated individuals, accounting for 84.71 percent (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). Based on education level, internet users are predominantly high school graduates or equivalent, making up 38.70 percent, followed by elementary school graduates or equivalent at 21.62 percent, junior high school graduates or equivalent at 19.85 percent, college graduates at 16.70 percent, diploma holders at 3.15 percent, and those without a diploma at 13.42 percent. This data is consistent with the previously presented data on the purpose of internet access. Thus, it can be interpreted that social media access is dominated by educated users. This dominance is created due to the motivation to showcase self-existence, seek entertainment, and complete academic tasks (Hidayat et al., 2016). The high access to social media among students is caused by the trend of digital content on various platforms that are massively followed by students, such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook. The high intensity of social media use can have an impact on various aspects. The high intensity of social media use causes mental health issues in the form of apathy (Fitri, 2017; Pratama & Sari, 2020). The research by (Saniyyah et al., 2021) reveals that high intensity of social media use causes eye fatigue and emotional disturbances. Another study shows that social media use decreases students' motivation to learn and leads to inappropriate speech (Saihu, 2021).

Besides negative impacts, social media also brings positive effects. Social media provides convenience for students to understand lesson materials about harakat, qalqalah, and tajwid in Islamic religious education (Dwistia et al., 2022). Social media as an effective tool for socializing health literacy to improve mental health and engage in health management behaviors (Li & Liu, 2020; Septiana, 2021). The use of social media is effective in enhancing students' speaking skills (Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019). The research by (Jurgens & Helsloot, 2018) reveals the role of social media in influencing the resilience of the community in facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

Previous studies have examined the negative and positive impacts caused by the use of social media. The literature review shows that research examining the impact of social media on students' reading comprehension abilities is still limited. Existing research focuses on the impact of social media on student lifestyles (Sari et al., 2023), the effectiveness of social media as an online learning medium (Daheri et al., 2020; Pustikayasa, 2019), social media as a digital literacy medium (Sahidillah & Miftahurrisqi, 2019), the level of student addiction to social media (Hartinah et al., 2019), the intensity of social media use and the level of student depression (Al Aziz, 2020), and the social media literacy model for students (Sulthan & Istiyanto, 2019).

Studies on the frequency of social media use have been conducted in various fields. Extensive media use (>4 hours daily) among US youth is associated with higher odds of daily e-cigarette use. This was attributed to exposure to tobacco content on social media influencing e-cigarette use (Richardson et al., 2024; Vassey et al., 2022). In healthcare, Minami et al., (2022) studied high-frequency social media use in general surgery trainees. The results suggested that trainees internalized social media into their education, experiencing more benefits and fewer risks. Higher exposure to social media platforms was related to better entrepreneurial attitudes and perceptions in university students in Chile (Barrera-Verdugo & Villarroel-Villarroel, 2022). Scale measures of adolescents' digital technology interaction and importance showed a positive relationship to frequency of social media use (Moreno et al., 2021). These various studies interpret that the frequency of social media use has an influence and contribution in various fields.

In contrast to previous studies, this research focuses on examining students' reading comprehension ability based on the frequency of social media use which is divided into three frequencies, namely low, medium, and high. In addition, this study will also reveal the purpose of social media on reading comprehension ability. Thus, this research question is whether there is an influence of the frequency of social media use and the purpose of social media on students' reading comprehension ability.

Materials and Methods

This research adopts a quantitative explanatory approach to investigate the relationship between social media usage and reading comprehension among students in the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program at Makassar State University. With a robust sample size of 293 respondents, the study aims to provide empirical insights into how the frequency and purpose of social media usage

correlate with students' reading comprehension abilities. To ensure comprehensive data collection, the study utilizes questionnaires and objective tests as the main research instruments.

The questionnaire is designed to collect both demographic and behavioral data. It consists of two primary sections: the first part focuses on gathering respondents' identity details, such as their initials and current semester, providing baseline information for analysis. The second part explores the frequency and purposes of social media use among the participants. By categorizing social media usage based on frequency and purpose, the study can reveal behavioral patterns and identify variations in how social media is integrated into the students' daily lives.

The objective test, on the other hand, is a critical instrument used to measure students' reading comprehension levels. The test items are developed based on the internationally recognized 2018 PISA test framework, ensuring that the assessment aligns with global standards for reading literacy. The use of objective tests enhances the reliability of the data, as it provides measurable and comparable scores that reflect students' reading abilities. Both the questionnaire and the test were distributed using the Microsoft Forms platform, which ensures efficient and systematic data collection while allowing respondents to participate conveniently.

To analyze the collected data, the study employs a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive analysis involves the use of frequency (n) and percentage to examine variations in social media frequency and its purposes among respondents. This method provides a clear picture of how often students engage with social media and the specific reasons for their usage, such as entertainment, communication, education, or information-seeking purposes. For instance, a descriptive analysis might reveal that a significant percentage of students use social media daily, primarily for entertainment and communication, while a smaller proportion uses it for educational or academic purposes.

In addition to descriptive statistics, the study uses the Kruskal-Wallis test, a non-parametric inferential statistical approach, to identify differences in reading comprehension based on social media frequency. The Kruskal-Wallis test is particularly suitable for this study because it does not assume a normal distribution of data and allows for the comparison of multiple independent groups. By applying this test, the research examines whether students with higher frequencies of social media use demonstrate significantly different reading comprehension scores compared to those who use social media less frequently. For example, the analysis might uncover that students with moderate or low social media usage perform better on reading comprehension tests than their peers with excessive social media engagement. To ensure accuracy and rigor, the IBM SPSS version 26 software is used for statistical analysis. SPSS enables efficient processing of large datasets and provides precise results for both descriptive and inferential analyses. By combining these analytical methods, the study not only identifies patterns in social media usage but also explores the potential impacts on students' reading comprehension. This dual approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the relationship between social media behavior and academic performance.

This research provides a comprehensive and data-driven exploration of the impact of social media usage on reading comprehension. By using robust research instruments and statistical methods, it aims to offer valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and students themselves. Understanding how social media frequency correlates with reading comprehension can inform strategies to optimize social media use for educational purposes while minimizing potential negative effects on academic performance. The findings of this study can contribute to the development of targeted interventions and learning models that enhance students' literacy skills in an increasingly digitalized world.

Results and Discussion

The results of the descriptive analysis show that students' comprehension abilities vary based on their frequency of social media use. Table 1 shows that students with low social media frequency (n=125) have a lower average rank in reading comprehension compared to other groups, which is 134.55. Students with moderate social media frequency (n=88) have the highest average rank, which is 161.68, while students with high social media frequency (n=80) have an average rank of 150.31, placing them between the low and moderate groups. Based on the average ranks, it can be concluded that students with moderate social

media frequency have the best reading comprehension, while students with low social media frequency have the worst reading comprehension.

Table 1. Reading comprehension level

Variable	Subvariable	n	%	Mean Rank
Frequency of Social Media Use	Low	125	42.66	134.55
	Medium	88	30.03	161.68
	High	80	27.30	150.31

The results of the statistical analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis test in Table 2 show that the significance value of students' reading comprehension based on social media frequency is 0.061. This value indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in reading comprehension among groups with different social media usage frequencies (low, medium, high). However, the value of 0.061 is close to the significance level of 0.05, which suggests a tendency towards a difference.

Table 2. Understanding the Kruskal-Wallis test

Variable	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Asymp. Sig. (p)
Frequency of Social Media Use	5.586	2	.061

Further analysis was conducted on the aspect of social media usage goals for each frequency, the results of which are detailed in Table 3. The goal of using social media to obtain information was the highest in the low-frequency group ($n=109$) and the medium-frequency group ($n=77$), while the goal of obtaining entertainment was the highest in the high-frequency group, with the goal of obtaining information in second place. Meanwhile, the goal of using social media to create content was the lowest in each frequency group. This data shows that students from various frequency groups utilize social media for various purposes, predominantly to obtain information.

Table 3. The purpose of social media

Tujuan	Low		Medium		High	
	n	f (%)	n	f (%)	n	f (%)
Creat content	16	12.8	9	10.23	10	12.5
Entertainment	102	81.6	73	82.95	76	95
Communication	99	79.2	75	85.23	71	88.75
Information	109	87.2	77	87.50	73	91.25
Education	103	82.4	74	84.09	70	87.5

Discussion

The research results show that the significance value of social media frequency on reading comprehension ability is 0.061. This value interprets that social media frequency does not significantly affect reading comprehension ability, but there is a tendency for a difference because it approaches the significance level of 0.05. These findings are consistent with the research results (Oguguo et al., 2020) that there is no significant difference in the frequency of social media use on students' academic performance, including reading comprehension. Social media is not always considered to have a negative impact on academic achievement or reading comprehension as long as the activity does not interfere with the main learning process. Another study supporting the findings of this research is (Hu & Yu, 2021), which states that the impact of social media depends on how it is used, allowing students to excel even while being active on social media.

The second finding of this study is that good reading performance occurs in social media users with moderate frequency ($> 3 < 5$ hours), followed by high frequency (> 5 hours), and the worst reading comprehension performance occurs in low frequency (< 3 hours). This study's findings support the research (Lema et al., 2018) which states that moderate frequency in social media use has better reading performance compared to extreme users (low or high). Moderate frequency social media users are

considered moderate users, meaning they can balance their online activities. From a psychological perspective, it is emphasized that moderate users have better reading abilities because they are less likely to be distracted (lack of focus, fatigue, lack of learning activities) when using social media excessively, whereas low-frequency users may experience a lack of social support and important learning resources for cognitive development (Lema et al., 2018; Trinczer et al., 2024). Study findings by Santoso et al., (2022) revealed that moderate use of social media can improve children's cognitive abilities. Another finding was conducted by Sadha et al., (2022) who revealed that the reading ability of students who use moderate social media has better scores. The study of moderate use of social media not only contributes to the academic world, but various aspects such as social society (Kosasih, 2019) and tolerance (Novia & Wasehudin, 2020). In contrast to moderate users, frequent social media users are at risk of information overload, which can lead to cognitive overload or information processing that exceeds memory capacity. The complex information received is processed in such a way that focus and reading comprehension are disrupted. Nawaz et al., (2018) state that individuals who are exposed to excessive information when using social media tend to face difficulties in processing information, which is associated with increased cognitive load. In addition, Lang (2000) revealed that individuals have a limited capacity to process information so that when this limit is exceeded, it can cause a decrease in the ability to understand information. The same thing was revealed by Guo et al., (2020) that excessive use of social media can accelerate the appearance of fatigue which in turn can have an impact on students' ability to understand reading. Research conducted by (Hameed et al., 2022) shows that students who face cognitive overload tend to experience a decline in text comprehension quality and difficulty in maintaining attention. These studies support the findings of this study and interpret that high frequency social media use affects the quality of reading comprehension. Meanwhile, low-frequency social media users have limitations in reading ability due to a lack of exposure to relevant digital content and the development of digital literacy skills (Umar & Idris, 2018).

The results of the descriptive analysis reveal that obtaining information is the highest goal of accessing social media. The highest social media goal in the group with the best understanding (medium frequency) is to obtain information. This discussion is different from the previous explanation of the negative impact of information overload. This discussion leads to the perspective of the positive impact of social media users accessing information. The purpose of accessing information on social media plays a role in the increased insight possessed by users. This is related to the advantages of social media that are able to provide access to information quickly and with quality that can improve comprehension skills (Meza, 2024). Information obtained on social media is processed in the brain and potentially at three structural levels of the information system, namely sensory, working memory, and long-term memory which play a role in information storage (Rehalat & Rehalat, 2014). Information can expand knowledge and increase understanding if it is relevant, organized, and focused. Such conditions place social media as a tool to reduce the cognitive load of information recipients. The purpose of accessing information plays a role in increasing the knowledge possessed by users. The content accessed on social media plays an important role in reading comprehension performance. This finding is supported by previous research that the purpose of using social media affects good performance and has a positive impact (Davidovitch & Gerkerova, 2023; Hu & Yu, 2021; Robinson & Robinson, 2021).

The goal of accessing social media that positively impacts reading performance has been explored by various researchers. Social media use oriented towards education tends to have increased literacy skills (Gagalang, 2022). The use of social media as a collaborative learning tool can enhance digital literacy and reading interest (Dukper et al., 2018). The findings of Boahene et al., (2019) reveal that the use of social media for educational purposes is positively correlated with academic performance, influenced by self-efficacy. Previous research findings discuss the positive impact of social media when used for educational purposes. Unlike the findings of previous research, which revealed a dominant purpose of using social media for educational purposes, this study uncovers a dominant goal of obtaining information.

As a point of comparison, various previous studies have revealed the negative impact of social media based on the content accessed. Boroon et al., (2021) revealed various negative impacts of social media that cause mental health problems, such as jealousy, loneliness, anxiety, and impact on academic performance. Furthermore, six categories of negative effects were categorized, namely cost of social exchange, annoying

content, privacy concerns, security threats, cyberbullying, and low performance. Finding of Pang (2022) reveals the negative impact of social media content that causes anxiety, social isolation, violence, and emotional distress. A more specific study of young people was conducted by Noori et al., (2023) who explored the effects arising from social media, namely social isolation which triggers physical, emotional, mental, and psychological problems. Another finding was revealed by Hiustra et al., (2023) that social media content puts pressure to meet certain expectations set by others and can lead to body image and other mental health problems. The findings that have been described represent that social media content determines the impact. Thus, the results of this study complement the findings of previous research. Therefore, these findings have implications for the recommendation of students as moderate social media users and the application of digital literacy in education.

Conclusions

The results of the study show that there is a tendency to influence the frequency of social media on students' reading comprehension skills. Moderate social media frequency ($> 3 < 5$ hours) has better reading comprehension skills than high and low frequency. Medium frequency users are moderate users, which means they are able to balance their social media activities. Good comprehension performance at a moderate social media frequency is supported by the dominant purpose of using social media to obtain information. The results of the study also revealed that the type of content (positive-negative) also influences individual circumstances. Based on these findings, researchers provide recommendations to promote moderate social media users by implementing digital literacy programs in education with various designs that can be applied, including (a) integration of literacy programs in the curriculum, (b) moderate use of social media as a learning strategy, (c) development of guidelines for educational and positive social media use, and (d) evaluation and monitoring of social media use. Exploration of the impact of social media based on the type of platform needs to be done to comprehensively reveal the types of social media that have a positive-negative influence.

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