



Social Media Addiction and Mental Health Among College Students

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Abstract. Mental health remains a critical priority, as individuals with good mental well-being tend to experience a higher quality of life. However, mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and psychological distress are increasingly prevalent among university students. One contributing factor to these issues is the excessive use of social media, driven by rapid technological advancements. This study aims to empirically examine the relationship between social media addiction and mental health among university students. A quantitative approach was employed, with the population consisting of students from University X. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, involving a total of 111 students. Data were analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation to test the research hypothesis. The results indicated a significant negative relationship between social media addiction and students' mental health ($r = -0.407$; $p < 0.01$). These findings suggest that the higher the level of social media addiction, the lower the level of mental health among students, and vice versa.

Keywords: addiction; social media; mental health

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Introduction

Mental health is critical for a person to have a good life. Mental health is a state that is not bound by various mental disorders so that it can live an everyday life. This state is characterized by intense emotional feelings when taking actions that will affect life (Saparwadi, [2021](#)). Strong feelings are expected to align with the development of social life, physical development, and intellectual development. Individuals are said to be mentally healthy if they realize their potential in themselves to the fullest, can solve a problem, and are productive and active in their community, thus avoiding mental illness problems (Rosmalina & Khaerunnisa, [2021](#); Suwijik & A'yun, [2022](#)). The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2023 explained that mental health is a fundamental human right where, in order to get well-being in life, one must be free from mental problems.

Keyes says that mental health is not only free from mental illness but a state of mental well-being, so Veit and Ware say that mental well-being includes two aspects: the first aspect is a person's freedom from psychological distress and the second aspect is psychological well-being (in Suryanto & Nada, [2021](#)). According to Ryff, psychological well-being describes individual mental health as being influenced by fulfilling good psychological functions (in Maula & Kustanti, [2020](#)). According to Huppert, it is a condition in which a person feels happy to work effectively and accept bad feelings that arise and are part of everyone's life (in Rantepadang & Gery, [2020](#)). According to Fadhilah, psychological well-being can help grow positive emotions. It can feel life satisfaction and happiness, which can control emotions and reduce the tendency to behave negatively (Ismuniar & Ardiwinata [2021](#)).

Psychological well-being is often used to observe individual efforts to fulfill all the criteria for positive psychological functioning described by Ryff (in Tranggono, [2022](#)). Based on Basic Health Research (Riskesdas), in 2018, more than 19 million Indonesians aged more than 15 years experienced mental-emotional disorders, and more than 12 million of those aged more than 15 years also experienced depressive disorders, which can cause reckless things such as suicide. The saddest thing is that around 47.7% aged 10-39 years old became suicide perpetrators. The saddest thing is that around 47.7% aged 10-39 years old became suicide perpetrators (Anwar, [2023](#)). Considering the many cases that arise, mental health problems are an important priority. In line with a statement from Rully ([2024](#)), 1 in 3 Indonesian adolescents, totaling 15.5 million or 34.9%, had mental health problems in the past 12 months.

One in 25 adolescents, totaling 2.45 million or 5.5%, had a mental disorder within the last 12 months, with anxiety disorder being one of the most common. Hakam, head of Semarang City Health Office, said that if the number of depression cases is the highest health case, based on data, there are 935 recorded mental health cases until October 10, 2023. The recorded cases showed

the dominance of depressive disorders with 445 cases, followed by 276 cases of mixed disorders between depression and anxiety (Hakam, [2023](#)).

According to health experts Merriam-Webster in Zulkarnain in 2019, mental health is when a person has good emotional and psychological health, allowing individuals to utilize their cognitive and emotional abilities to live and meet their daily needs (in Nur et al., [2023](#)). Mental health is influenced by six factors, namely psychological, biological, social, environmental, economic, and religiosity. These six factors are interconnected (according to Mrazek & Haggerty and Rogers & Piggrim in Efendi et al., [2023](#)). According to a survey conducted by Mira ([2024](#)) it turns out that students experience a phenomenon with an age range of 18-25 years where they have different demands.

In research conducted by Rosmalina and Khaerunnisa ([2021](#)), it is explained that mental health is influenced by factors originating from within the individual and external factors such as the surrounding environment. Things that enter the individual's environment will affect mental health, and one of them is the use of social media technology, which will affect individual mental health (Rosmalina & Khaerunnisa, [2021](#)). External factors significantly influence mental health, including the family environment, which is the first environment experienced by each individual, and social media, which is currently a reference for mental health in everyone (Phitaloka et al., [2023](#)). Research conducted by the Pew Research Center explains that teenagers' lives are difficult to separate from the use of social media (Monica & Jiang, [2018](#)). There is still a research gap regarding the effect of addiction to the use of social media on mental health, which is influenced by five social media platforms (Instagram, Youtube, Twitter, Tiktok, and Facebook) in individuals with an early adult age range of 18 to 25 years old who are students and this study was conducted to find out how these five social media platforms affect the mental health of students in early adulthood.

The National Institute of Mental Health says that adolescents aged 18-25 years using social media will be at risk of mental disorders. Not only that but the journal Psychiatry and Behavioral Health, which conducted the research, found that adolescents have a risk of experiencing mental health problems in self-image due to using social media for more than three hours a day. A Pew Research survey (2018) found that out of six teenagers, one experienced six forms of online violence (Monica & Jiang, [2018](#)). Fadli said that because of using social media, adolescents' mental conditions become worse because they feel that the things they experience are normal but not justified, which can cause serious problems for mental health (Fadli, [2023](#)).

This situation is reinforced by a survey conducted by the Indonesia National Adolescent Health Survey (I-NAMHS), which explains that three Indonesian adolescents have low mental health because social media provides easy access to information, resulting in students self-

diagnosing themselves after getting information from social media, which because of this many students experience anxiety, depression, and even self-harm (Mira, [2024](#)). Social media is part of technology as a supporting tool in human survival and has developed to facilitate people in communicating and searching for information without being hampered by distance and time. Indonesia is experiencing a rapid increase in internet users, totaling 1.8 million (an increase of 0.8%) in 2024 compared to 2023. According to data, Indonesian citizens spend 7 hours 38 minutes every day using social media, with users in 2024 totaling 139 million people with an average daily usage of 3 hours 11 minutes (blog slice, [2024](#)).

According to Parker and Solis (in Saputra, [2019](#)), social media is a supporting tool for interacting through various types, such as creating, sharing, and exchanging ideas or information either with words, videos, or images, using a network and virtual community. Social media is a platform that engages in intense and deep social interaction, expands the range of friendships, and allows for creative self-expression (Lubis, [2024](#)). According to Bintang, social media can increase the ability to interact with others and provide unlimited information, and social media can fulfill support for both peer, emotional, and social support (Bintang, [2023](#)). However, various issues arise along with these benefits where this issue is related to psychological well-being (Lubis, [2024](#)).

Bashir and Bhat suggest that social media is used to help social and economic progress (in Fazrian, [2023](#)). However, many findings from a study that classifies the influence on social media users experience impacts such as stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness, which is even a phenomenon in the younger generation that disrupts mental health and provides much concern (Fazrian, [2023](#)). According to Iryadi et al. ([2024](#)) the use of social media that cannot be controlled can affect mental health, which later causes individuals to experience depression, stress, anxiety, and loneliness.

Sahin (in Nagari et al., [2023](#)), suggested that social media addiction has occurred a lot and caused the emergence of addiction to social media. According to Thakkar (in Jamaludin et al., [2022](#)) addiction is a medical and psychiatric condition with characteristics, using something that exceeds the limit and, if done continuously, will hurt life. The American Psychological Association explains that dependence is not only caused by addictive substances but certain behaviors or activities can cause addiction, one of which is the activity of using social media.

According to Sahin (in Siregar & Rahayu, [2022](#)), the tendency of social media addiction is a form of individual behavior with excessive social media-centered attention, consisting of 4 aspects: virtual Tolerance, virtual communication, virtual problems, and virtual information. Virtual Tolerance is the need to spend more time for satisfaction and pleasure on social media; virtual communication is a condition of individuals preferring to interact with social media

because they do not like interacting in the real world; virtual problems are conditions of individuals who ignore everything (education, work, friends, family, etc.) who prefer social media, and virtual information is a condition of individuals who tend to seek or get information from social media (Siregar & Rahayu, [2022](#)). Several studies also explain that the impact of excessive use of social media can lead to mental health disorders such as the emergence of feelings of anxiety, depression, and psychological distress.

The existence of psychological disorders in individuals can interfere with the mindset of individuals in everyday life, where later, they will tend to experience sleep disturbances due to the psychological pressure they experience (Astuti et al., [2022](#)). Keles et al. 2020 said that the fundamental problem that occurs in the younger generation is anxiety and depression caused by excessive use of social media to cause physical effects such as increased blood pressure, pain throughout the body, the appearance of eye diseases, and even cause excessive weight (Fazrian, [2023](#)). Excessive use of social media can also lead to feelings of loneliness, self-isolation, bullying, or even cyberbullying. This also has a detrimental impact on the mental and emotional health of individuals, increasing the risk of depression, anxiety, or even the worst impact, which can threaten the safety of individual lives (Nur et al., [2023](#)). Based on the explanation that has been given, the researcher concludes that mental health is essential for students; mentally healthy individuals can live everyday life without mental problems; however, the negative impact of social media can interfere with mental health.

This study explores the relationship between social media use and university students' mental health due to the rapid development of technology. Although social media provides various benefits, there are also negative impacts, especially addiction and mental health. Therefore, this study aims to empirically examine the relationship between addiction to social media use and mental health in college students, with the hope of making a theoretical contribution to understanding the impact of social media use on students' psychological well-being. Practically, the results of this study will provide recommendations for effective prevention strategies to reduce the risk of adverse impacts of social media use on students' health.

This study hypothesizes that there is a negative relationship between addiction to the use of social media and students' mental health. This is based on the impact of excessive use of social media, which will cause depression, stress, anxiety, and loneliness, which affect students' mental health. This study differs from previous studies because of the differences in respondents taken from students at several universities in Semarang, which shows negative results.

Methods

This study uses a quantitative research method approach, with dependent variables of mental health and independent variables of addiction to social media use. According to Webster (in Nur et al. [2023](#)), mental health is when a person has good emotional and psychological health, allowing individuals to utilize their cognitive and emotional abilities to live and meet their daily needs. Addiction to the use of social media is a situation where individuals tend to spend their time on social media then the emergence of addiction to social media will later appear in psychological disorders.

The research design used a quantitative correlational approach to identify the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables and to examine the relationship between social media addiction (independent variable) and mental health (dependent variable) in university students. The study population was college students in Semarang City who use social media using purposive sampling with the criteria of respondents being college students, having at least one social media account (e.g., YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook), actively using social media (both posting and watching content) and the respondents in this study were 111 students. The study used two adapted questionnaire instruments, namely the Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS-SF) or Social Media Addiction Scale-Student Form, which consists of 4 aspects, namely virtual tolerance, virtual communication, virtual problems, and virtual information consisting of 17 items, one of which is Life without social media is empty for me, using a Likert scale of 1-5 where 1 for disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for neutral, 4 for agree, and 5 for strongly agree. The reliability coefficient of SMAS-SF is 0.93.

Mental health was measured using the Mental Health Inventory (MHI), which consists of 23 items, one of which is I am in a state of tension, stress, or distress, using a Likert scale of 1-5 where for negative items the scores are reversed so that strongly disagree (1) becomes (5), disagree (2) becomes (4), neutral (3) remains (3), agree (4) becomes (2), and strongly agree (5) becomes (1). The stability coefficient of the MHI is in the range of 0.56 to 0.64, with two global dimensions: two aspects in the first dimension and three in the second dimension. The first dimension is psychological well-being, which has two aspects: emotional ties and general positive affect. The second dimension is Psychological distress with three aspects, namely aspects of anxiety, aspects of depression, and aspects of loss of behavioral or emotional control.

Data was collected online using Google Forms by distributing SMAS-SF and MHI questionnaires to respondents who met the criteria using a Likert scale. The data analysis used was the product-moment correlation test to see if there is a linear relationship between two variables that have normally distributed data, using SPSS software to test the strength and direction of the relationship between addiction to social media use and mental health.

Results

From the research that has been conducted, it is known that the respondents totaled 111 respondents. To obtain an overview of the characteristics of participants in this study, the following is a description of respondents based on gender and age in Table 1.

Table 1.

Description of respondents by gender and age

Category	f	%
Gender		
Female	56	50.5%
Male	55	49.5%
Age (years)		
18	6	5.4%
19	23	20.7%
20	46	41.4%
21	18	16.2%
22	12	10.8%
23	5	4.5%
24	0	0%
25	1	0.9%
Total	111	100%

Based on Table 1, the respondents in this study consisted of 56 females (50.5%) and 55 males (49.5%), which shows a relatively balanced gender composition. In terms of age, most respondents were 20 years old (41.4%), followed by 19 years old (20.7%) and 21 years old (16.2%). Other ages included 22 years old (10.8%), 18 years old (5.4%), 23 years old (4.5%), and 25 years old (0.9%), while there were no respondents aged 24 years old. This data shows that respondents are dominated by students aged 19 to 21, representing the general age of active students, and reflects a fairly representative distribution of demographic characteristics of the target population.

Before conducting hypothesis analysis, the normality assumption test is carried out to ensure that the data used meets the standard distribution requirements, a prerequisite in parametric statistical analysis. The results of the calculation of the assumption test on each paragraph with Kolmogorov-Smirnov can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test Results

Variable	Statistik K-S	N	Sig. (p)
Social Media Use Addiction	0.079	111	0.082
Mental Health	0.080	111	0.081

Source: SPSS v.25, 2025.

Based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results shown in Table 2, it is known that the significance value for the social media use addiction variable is 0.082, and for mental health, it is

0.081. Since both significance values are greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the data is usually distributed and meets the assumptions for further parametric analysis.

Furthermore, to ensure that the relationship between the variables of social media use addiction and mental health meets the assumptions of regression analysis, linearity testing was conducted. The results of linearity testing are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Linearity Test Results

Variable	F - value	P - value	Results
Mental Health *Social Media Use Addiction	1.658	0.000 (<0.05)	Linier

Source: SPSS v.25, 2025

Based on the Linearity test results displayed in Table 3, it is known that the relationship between addiction to the use of social media and mental health is linear. Because with a Sig value. 0.000 for linearity and 0.070 for deviation from linearity show a significant and linear relationship.

This study examined the relationship between social media addiction and mental health in university students, including the influence of several aspects of social media addiction. To determine the strength and direction of the relationship, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted, the results of which are presented in the following table.

Table 4.
Correlation Results of Social Media Addiction and its Aspects with Mental Health

Relationship	r-value	p-value	Correlation Level
Total Correlation			
Social Media Addiction - Mental Health	-0.407	<0.001	Medium
Correlation of Addiction Aspects with Mental Health			
Virtual Tolerance - Mental Health	-0.282	<0.001	Weak
Virtual Communication - Mental Health	-0.381	<0.001	Medium
Virtual Problem - Mental Health	-0.359	<0.001	Medium
Virtual Information - Mental Health	-0.298	<0.001	Weak

Source: SPSS v.25, 2025.

The results of Pearson correlation analysis showed a significant negative relationship between overall social media addiction and students' mental health ($r = -0.407$, $p < 0.001$), which is classified as a moderate correlation category.

In addition, analysis of the aspects of social media addiction to mental health also showed a significant negative relationship for all aspects. Virtual Communication ($r = -0.381$, $p < 0.001$) and Virtual Problem ($r = -0.359$, $p < 0.001$) aspects have a moderate correlation, which means they have a relatively more substantial influence on the decline in students' mental health. Meanwhile, the aspects of Virtual Information ($r = -0.298$, $p < 0.001$) and Virtual Tolerance ($r = -0.282$, $p < 0.001$) showed a weaker correlation, although still significant.

Discussion

Based on the results of research that has been conducted by researchers for addiction to the use of social media, getting results where from social media addiction falls into the moderate group, meaning that students aged 20 to 25 use social media but not to the stage of addiction and from mental health also fall into the moderate group, meaning that mental health conditions in students aged 20 to 25 are prone to problems because their mental conditions are not entirely healthy. This is in line with Budury et al. (in Sa'diyah et al., [2022](#)) who said that the use of social media in adolescent groups every day to interact with each other could trigger mental health problems. However, it turns out that addiction to the use of social media causes someone to experience mental health problems. Especially in college students because they use social media with high frequency and intensity, such as the emergence of FOMO or Fear Of Missing Out because they see campus friends involved in fun activities or visiting luxurious places, experiencing cyberbullying or online harassment, getting hurtful or embarrassing comments, appearing distractions and procrastination on things, and creating unrealistic expectations. This results in mental fatigue, feelings of anxiety, self-doubt, and increased feelings of stress, and can even lead to symptoms of depression.

The results shown using product moment analysis can be concluded that the relationship between addiction to the use of social media and student mental health shows a significant negative correlation. This means that if the intensity and frequency of using social media are low, then someone has a high mental health condition. Vice versa, if the frequency and intensity of social media use are high, the mental health condition is low. In contrast to the results of Siburian and Ricky ([2024](#)), which showed that there was a low relationship because the results of the respondents' level of social media addiction fell into the low category, and the respondents' mental health fell into the abnormal category.

The characteristics of an unhealthy mental condition can be seen from both sides, namely first seen from psychological well-being, which is a condition in which individuals can realize their abilities, work productively, contribute to their community, and overcome life pressures normally (Septania & Maryam., [2022](#)). It is raised with two characteristics: emotional ties, which are emotional relationships from psychological responses, and the body, which is considered a subjective emotional symptom (Syarif, [2016](#)). If this study is included in the virtual communication aspect of addiction to the use of social media and the results of this study show that it is also quite influential on mental health.

In addition, there is also a generally positive effect, which is a reaction that arises due to pleasant events that give rise to a sense of satisfaction, happiness, and pleasure to make life more meaningful (Sari, [2012](#)). Research into the virtual tolerance aspect of addiction to the use of social

media and the results of this study show that it has a considerable effect on mental health. Judging from psychological distress, according to Turnip et al. (in Sitompul, [2021](#)), is an emotional suffering felt by individuals that can hinder and disrupt health and lead to depression and anxiety. Then, according to Mirowsky and Ross, it is almost the same but explains more details of the symptoms of depression and anxiety that exist in psychological distress with two aspects in it, namely, the first occurs due to mood disorders, the second occurs due to factors from outside the individual's body (Sitompul, [2021](#)).

Psychological distress is an individual's mental condition that is not good with the psychological pressure that occurs, which appears with three behaviors namely; the first anxiety behavior is an anxious condition due to events or situations (Marza et al., [2023](#)). Meanwhile, according to Sarwono in 2017, Psychological distress is an irrational fear of an unclear situation or object (Nugraha, [2020](#)). Based on the results of the research that has been done, most respondents are in the category of moderate mental health, which is not good and not evil, which is influenced by the behavior of using social media.

Second, depression behavior is a disorder that is not realized by the sufferer or the people around him, which, according to Jaka in 2016, is an invisible disorder (Sulistiyorini, [2017](#)). Meanwhile, according to Nevid et al. 2008, it is a disorder that occurs in feelings or moods that appear as negative emotions, so it can interfere with individuals living their days (Nazneen, [2019](#)). Based on the results of the study show that the use of social media affects individual feelings if individuals fall into the addiction category using social media.

Finally, Loss of behavioral or emotional control behavior tends to use cognitive processes and involve cognition in every individual action where this cannot be controlled by the individual himself (Rahman et al., [2020](#); Nasution, [2020](#)). This is in line with research, which is also influenced by media use in the virtual problem aspect.

In line with Iraydi et al. ([2024](#)) if uncontrolled use of social media will affect mental health, this study shows a strong relationship between the use of social media very influential mental health, which influenced four aspects. First, virtual tolerance is the need to spend time on social media. Second, virtual communication is when individuals prefer to communicate through social media rather than directly. The third virtual problem is making social media an escape from all the real-life problems, where the individual has a happy feeling. Finally, the fourth virtual information is using social media to search or find information.

The study's results explain that if the frequency and intensity of using social media are higher, the mental health condition worsens. Students' mental health can be problematic if they often use social media, and vice versa; if the intensity and frequency of using social media is low, then someone has a healthy mental health condition. Based on the results of this study, the

intensity of students using social media should be as necessary as possible so as not to damage mental health, and the results of this study can be used to make students and universities more aware of mental health and not excessive use of social media.

Not only that, it can also find out the consequences of using social media, such as the emergence of poor mental health, such as feelings of loneliness, feeling intimidated, feeling anxious, depression, depression, and so on. This will later interfere with daily life and the emergence of physical impacts such as rising blood pressure, pain throughout the body, eye disease, excessive weight, and so on. The limitation of the research is the limited time of data collection, so the research must focus on the process and the data obtained. However, the use of rigorous quantitative methods and careful data analysis resulted in reliable findings on social media addiction and the mental health of university students.

Conclusion

Social media addiction affects all individuals, including university students. The development of technology and social media brings both positive and negative impacts. Research shows that social media addiction is closely related to students' mental health, where intense use can trigger symptoms of anxiety, stress, depression, loneliness, and even suicidal thoughts. This study confirms the negative relationship between social media addiction and mental health. Self-awareness and the role of parents are critical to control the use of social media. Unfortunately, many parents are less concerned, especially towards students who are considered adults. Further research on the influence of parental relationships on students' mental state related to social media use is expected to provide more comprehensive resultset.

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