The Relationship Between Social Media and Stress Levels of Adolescents in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: This qualitative study looks into the connection between Indonesian teenage stress levels and social media use. During semi-structured interviews with Indonesian teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18, several themes surfaced that demonstrated the complex relationship between social media and teenage wellbeing. Social media platforms facilitate social contact, but they also include stresses like social comparison, FOMO, and cyberbullying, as reported by participants. Social media is a source of both connection and stress. Teenagers use a variety of coping mechanisms, such as placing limits on their use of social media, going offline, practicing mindfulness, and asking for social support. Addressing social media-induced stress in Indonesian teenagers requires culturally sensitive methods that take into account local norms and beliefs. The results highlight the significance of encouraging digital literacy, creating safe spaces, and giving teenagers the tools they need to use social media appropriately. Policies and interventions to encourage positive mental health outcomes in the digital era can be devised by comprehending the complexity of social media's impact on teenage well-being.

Keywords: Social Media, Adolescents, Stress, Qualitative Analysis, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Like their peers throughout the world, adolescents in Indonesia are greatly impacted by social media, smartphones, and internet access. According to research, teenagers in Indonesia use social media extensively, especially in Yogyakarta and Central Java (Hamilton et al., 2023; Judijanto, Destiana, et al., 2024; Meilani et al., 2023; Sundarsih & Sudiarti, 2023). Character development has been impacted, attitudes during the COVID-19 epidemic have changed, and there has been a rise in the availability of pornography as a result of this exposure (Ariska et al., 2023; Nugroho et al., 2023; Sutanto et al., 2024). Teenagers are more likely than not to own a smartphone, which has made it easier for them to access social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp, which has shaped their interactions and communication. In addition, the impact that social media had on the

mental health and general wellbeing of teenagers during the pandemic highlights the important role that these platforms have in influencing teenage stress levels and attitudes.

Adolescents' lives have become increasingly reliant on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok, which provide opportunities for social connection and self-expression (Elsayed, 2021; Judijanto, Mendrofa, et al., 2024; Kaur et al., 2022). However, studies show that excessive social media use may have detrimental effects on mental health, such as anxiety, depression, and cyberbullying (Hussain & Khatoon, 2023; Kaur et al., 2022; Skogen et al., 2023). severe experiences on social media, such as unwanted attention, exclusion, and comparison, can have a severe impact on adolescents' mental health and result in anxiety and depression symptoms. Social media offers connections and social support, but it also has concerns, such as addiction and heightened feelings of loneliness. Interventions are therefore essential to encourage responsible social media use and protect teenagers from the negative impacts on their mental health.

Numerous research have provided insight into how social media use affects teenagers' psychological health. Research has indicated that excessive usage of social media by teenagers is linked to poorer self-esteem, more body image dissatisfaction, elevated melancholy, and increased anxiety (Harsono, 2024; Mougharbel et al., 2023; Satyaninrum et al., 2023). Furthermore, unfavorable social media experiences like cyberbullying, unwelcome attention, and isolation have been connected to anxiety, depressive, and decreased mental health in teenagers (Khalaf et al., 2023). Moreover, it has been discovered that social media addiction strongly correlates with self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, and depression, with social media regulating the relationship between the two (Skogen et al., 2023). These results highlight the necessity of focused treatments and tactics to support favorable mental health outcomes and lessen the detrimental impact of teenage social media use on stress levels.

Social media use among adolescents can have a big impact on their stress levels (Abdillah et al., 2024; Lokajova et al., 2023; Mougharbel et al., 2023). Adolescents under the age of 18 are most susceptible to psychological distress due to heavy social media use, especially when it exceeds three hours per day (Jost et al., 2023). Additionally, interacting with social media posts about health can exacerbate COVID-19 worry, particularly in teenagers who already experience a high level of health anxiety (Song et al., 2023). Social media platforms have the potential to function as both beneficial and detrimental coping mechanisms. They can impact stress levels by means of cyberbullying, unfavorable social comparison, and FOMO. In order to treat teenage stress in the digital age, it is imperative to comprehend these dynamics, highlighting the necessity of specialized interventions and support networks to encourage better social media usage and coping mechanisms.

With a sizable and diverse adolescent population, Indonesia offers a compelling framework for researching the connection between stress and social media use. Qualitative research is required to delve deeper into the subjective experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms of Indonesian adolescents in relation to social media-induced stress, even though quantitative studies have been very helpful in revealing the prevalence of social media usage and its relationship with stress levels among teenagers. This study uses a qualitative methodology to investigate the complex ways that social media affects teenagers' stress experiences in the Indonesian setting. The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the connection between Indonesian

adolescent stress levels and social media use. The study aims to clarify the lived experiences, attitudes, and coping mechanisms of Indonesian teenagers in reaction to stress caused by social media through the use of thematic analysis and in-depth interviews. By means of this investigation, the study hopes to enhance comprehension of the intricate relationships between teenage well-being and social media use, offering knowledge that can guide treatments and regulations meant to support favorable mental health consequences in the digital era.

Literature Review

Social Media Usage Among Adolescents

Teenagers in Indonesia are actively using social media sites like TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat for a variety of reasons (Nuraini et al., 2023; Sari & Lestaluhu, 2023; Sundarsih & Sudiarti, 2023). These sites are essential for assisting teenagers in developing their social networks, examining their identities, and finding creative outlets (Kurniawan et al., 2023). According to research, adolescents use social media for a variety of reasons, from interacting with others and exchanging information to gaining attention and boosting their self-esteem (Nugroho et al., 2023). Furthermore, social media's impact on teenagers' stress levels, mental health perspectives, language use, and character development has been noted. The results underscore the importance of social media in Indonesian teenagers' social life and overall wellbeing, underscoring the necessity of providing them with direction and oversight when it comes to their online activities.

Impact of Social Media on Mental Health

Adolescents who use social media excessively have been related to detrimental effects on their mental health, such as elevated stress, loneliness, anxiety, sadness, and low self-esteem (Khalaf et al., 2023; Satyaninrum et al., 2023; Sundarsih & Sudiarti, 2023). Teenagers' stress and wellbeing issues are exacerbated by elements including social comparison, cyberbullying, exposure to unattainable beauty standards, and the pressure to maintain a well-curated online persona (Hussain & Khatoon, 2023). Furthermore, the pressure to maintain an online presence and constant connectedness can increase stress and overwhelm, which may be detrimental to the mental health of teenagers (Skogen et al., 2023). These results highlight the significance of encouraging social media usage with awareness and putting interventions in place to lessen the negative impacts on teenagers' mental health.

Coping Mechanisms and Resilience

Teenagers that are stressed out by social media use a range of coping mechanisms to show resilience (Brimmel et al., 2023; Damra et al., 2024; Perry et al., 2023; Song et al., 2023; Y. Zhang, 2023). They use adaptive strategies include setting usage limits, going offline, practicing mindfulness, and looking for social support. On the other hand, maladaptive tactics like avoidance and over-reliance on reassurance can exacerbate stress and have unfavorable effects. The literature highlights the significance of comprehending these coping strategies in order to create therapies that improve resilience and adaptive abilities for handling stresses associated with social media. Research emphasizes the value of humor, social relationships, and active coping strategies in helping teenagers cope with stress and loneliness in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The study on coping mechanisms for cyberbullying also emphasizes the need of peer, instructor, and family support in mitigating the consequences of cyberbullying.

Cultural Context and Socio-Economic Factors

In Indonesia, cultural norms, values, and beliefs have a major impact on how adolescents use social media and deal with stress (Nugroho et al., 2023; Satyaninrum et al., 2023). Teenagers' interactions with social media and stress management are significantly influenced by socioeconomic factors, including differences in access to technology and digital literacy (Janitra & Aristi, 2023; Priyana, 2023). Cultural background and socioeconomic position also have an impact on adolescents' attitudes toward mental health, help-seeking behaviors, and available social support networks, which affects their coping mechanisms for stress brought on by social media (Y. Zhang, 2023). In the digital age, fostering positive mental health outcomes for Indonesian adolescents through tailored interventions and support systems requires an understanding of these intricate interplays.

Research Gaps and Limitations

Although the current body of research offers insightful information about the connection between teenage stress and social media use, there are still a number of gaps and restrictions that call for more study. The majority of the material now in publication is derived from quantitative research, which offers insightful data correlations but may be shallow in its comprehension of teenagers' subjective experiences and perspectives. In order to shed light on the contextual elements that influence Indonesian teenagers' connection with social media and stress, further in-depth exploration of their lived experiences through qualitative study is required. Furthermore, longitudinal research is required to investigate the long-term impacts of social media use on the mental health and general well-being of teenagers, accounting for changes in social media usage patterns over time and developmental trajectories.

METHOD

Research Design

This qualitative study uses a phenomenological methodology to investigate the connection between Indonesian teenage stress levels and social media use. Phenomenology aims to comprehend people's lived experiences and interpretations of a specific event, enabling a thorough investigation of the adolescents in Indonesia who attach subjective meaning to social media and stress.

Participant Recruitment

Purposive sampling will be used to choose participants, with a focus on adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 from various socioeconomic backgrounds and geographical areas in Indonesia. In order to ensure a diverse sample that accurately represents the demographic diversity of Indonesian teenagers, recruitment will be assisted through youth organizations, schools, and social media channels. Before beginning, participants will give informed consent after being made aware of the study's goals, methods, and rights.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews performed in Bahasa Indonesia will be used to gather data. It is possible to explore participant experiences, perceptions, and behaviors connected to social media and stress using semi-structured interviews. Topics like participants' social media usage habits, perceived social media stresses, coping strategies, and the perceived effects of social media on their well-being will all be covered in the interview guide. With the participants' permission, each interview will be audio recorded and is anticipated to run between forty-five and sixty minutes.

Data Analysis

NVivo, a qualitative analysis program, will be used for data analysis, making interview transcript arrangement, coding, and methodical inspection easier. First, in order to acquaint researchers with participant narratives, transcripts in Bahasa Indonesia will be uploaded into NVivo. Afterwards, transcripts will be coded line-by-line using open-coding, with early codes capturing important ideas like stress and social media. The first codes will then be categorized into higher-order topics using axial coding in order to create a cohesive framework. The process of thematic analysis involves locating recurrent themes in the dataset and analyzing and analyzing those themes in light of the research questions. By requesting participant comments, member checking will increase trustworthiness. To ensure the integrity of the study process, ethical considerations including informed consent, institutional review board approval, confidentiality, and procedures to protect anonymity will be carefully followed during analysis and reporting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the qualitative data revealed several key themes related to the relationship between social media usage and stress levels among adolescents in Indonesia. These themes emerged from the narratives of the participants and provided insights into their lived experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms in the context of social media-induced stress.

Theme 1: Social Media as a Double-Edged Sword

The qualitative analysis examined how individuals perceived social media as a stressor and a source of connection. The participants' tales offered valuable insights on the dual nature of social media usage among teenagers in Indonesia. Social media sites were generally appreciated by participants as useful resources for keeping in touch with friends and peers. They emphasized how social media makes communication easier, especially in today's digitally connected world where in-person interactions are frequently augmented or supplanted by virtual ones. Numerous respondents highlighted the significance of social media in enabling them to be informed about their friends' lives, exchange stories, and participate in social gatherings, even when they are geographically separated. One participant said, for example, "I use social media to stay in touch with my far-away friends." Even if we can't meet in person, it makes me feel more connected to them." Along with its advantages, individuals also talked about the pressures related to using social media. The pressure to uphold a positive online persona and win approval from followers, likes, and comments was a recurring topic. Participants talked of feeling pressured to project a certain image

of oneself on social media, which frequently resulted in worry, self-doubt, and feelings of insecurity. "I feel pressured to post only the best parts of my life on social media," one participant said. There are moments when I feel like I have to outdo everyone else to prove that my life is flawless as well."
Participants also mentioned how social comparison affected their stress levels. Numerous teenagers expressed feeling inferior or jealous of their peers' allegedly flawless lives as depicted on social media. A skewed perspective of reality and feelings of inadequacy were frequently brought on by the carefully chosen content and idealized pictures that others shared. "Seeing my friends' posts about their vacations or parties sometimes makes me feel like I'm missing out on all the fun," said one participant in reflection. Comparing oneself to others all the time can be difficult."

Theme 2: Stressors and Challenges

Participants in an investigation into the social media experiences of Indonesian teenagers disclosed a range of pressures and difficulties related to the platform's use. A number of major themes that illuminated the complex nature of stress brought on by social media surfaced through their personal stories.
The fear of missing out (FOMO) was frequently mentioned by participants as a major stressor associated with social media use. When they saw posts about social events, get-togethers, or experiences shared by their friends, they talked of feeling nervous and excluded. Feelings of inadequacy and social pressure were influenced by this worry of being left out or excluded from chances. "I sometimes feel like I'm not part of the group when I see my friends posting about parties or outings that I wasn't invited to," said one participant. Everyone seems to be enjoying themselves without me.
Participants also frequently reported experiencing stressors including cyberbullying and online harassment. On social media, a lot of teenagers talked about being the target of bullying or seeing bullying happen to others. Social media's accessibility and anonymity allow bullies to carry out their destructive acts with greater ease, which exacerbates victims' feelings of vulnerability, fear, and shame. Participants underlined the need for action to address and prevent online harassment and voiced concerns about the detrimental effects of cyberbullying on their mental health.
Participants also brought attention to the pressures placed on them by social media to live up to beauty standards and societal expectations. They talked about how they felt pressured to display themselves in a particular manner, frequently using editing programs, filters, and carefully chosen images to conform to ideas of success and beauty. Participants had low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and feelings of inadequacy as a result of the pressure to maintain an idealized image on social media. "I feel like I have to look perfect all the time on social media," said one participant. Seeing all those picture-perfect pictures can make me feel self-conscious."
Participants also identified worries about online safety, privacy, and the addictive nature of social media as additional sources of stress and worry. Many teenagers voiced concerns about cyber predators, the unauthorised sharing of their personal information, and the detrimental impact of excessive screen time on their mental and physical health. The necessity to maintain a healthy balance between their online and offline lives was acknowledged by the participants, but they struggled to cut off from social media because of its ubiquitous influence and addictive nature.

Theme 3: Coping Strategies and Resilience

The qualitative investigation revealed diverse coping mechanisms utilized by Indonesian teenagers to effectively manage the obstacles presented by stress stemming from social media use. Participants discussed how they handled the pressures brought on by using social media by sharing insights into their adaptability and resilience. Participants frequently reported using social support from friends, family, and reliable adults as a coping strategy. In order to deal with the stress that comes from social media, many teenagers stressed the value of confiding in personal relationships, getting guidance, and sharing experiences. Participants appreciated the empathy and support they received from their social networks and took solace in the knowledge that they were not the only ones going through difficult times. "Talking to my friends and family about what I'm going through on social media helps me feel better," one participant said. They are sympathetic to me and provide help when I need it." Hobbies and offline pursuits were found to be additional adaptive coping mechanisms by the subjects. A lot of teenagers talked about how important it is to disconnect from social media and engage in hobbies, sports, the arts, and outdoor activities in order to rejuvenate and decompress. Participants had the chance to unplug from the digital world, get perspective, and concentrate on their well-being through offline activities. One person said, "I like to spend time outside or work on my hobbies when I'm feeling stressed out by social media." It eases my mental clutter and promotes relaxation."

In addition, participants stressed the value of self-care practices and mindfulness training in managing stress and fostering wellbeing. Deep breathing, meditation, and yoga are examples of mindfulness techniques that have been shown to be useful in lowering anxiety and boosting resilience to stressors brought on by social media. In order to preserve equilibrium and perspective in their online relationships, participants acknowledged the importance of self-awareness and self-regulation. One participant said, "Reflecting on my feelings and pausing occasionally keeps me grounded and less influenced by what I see on social media." For me, developing mindfulness has changed everything."

Establishing limits on social media use and embracing technology in a healthy way were also emphasized as crucial coping strategies. The significance of self-control, self-discipline, and moderation in handling one's internet habits was stressed by the participants. Participants used digital-free zones, set screen time limits, and prioritized offline connections as ways to keep a healthy balance between their virtual and real-world experiences. "I try to set boundaries around my social media use and take regular breaks to focus on other aspects of my life," said one participant in the explanation. It keeps my connection with technology healthier and helps me avoid feeling overwhelmed."

Discussion

Dual Nature of Social Media

The study's conclusions highlight how social media serves as a stress reliever as well as a means of connection for young people in Indonesia. Social media platforms have a dual purpose in people's life by providing coping techniques and social support (Brimmel et al., 2023). On the other hand, overuse can result in "Fear of Missing Out" (FoMO), which can cause anxiety and depression symptoms (Gokul & Karthika, 2023; KANNAN & LAKSHMANAN, 2020). Young users are especially affected by this phenomena, which has an adverse effect on their social connections and mental health (Gao et al., 2023). Furthermore, narcissistic activities like social comparison and self-

disclosure, which are associated to social media weariness and FoMO, might raise stress levels (Jabeen et al., 2023). In order to tackle these intricacies, interventions ought to concentrate on reducing factors that cause FOMO, such as worry and time constraints, endorsing socially responsible actions, and offering assistance in handling adverse emotional states linked to social media consumption. In order to address both the positive and negative effects of social media on people's wellbeing, such focused initiatives are essential.

Culturally Relevant Approaches

The results highlight the significance of culturally appropriate methods for treating stress brought on by social media in Indonesian teenagers. Adolescents' interactions with social media are greatly influenced by cultural values, conventions, and traditions, which also define their support systems and coping mechanisms (Ahlborg et al., 2023; Y. Zhang, 2023). The cultural background of adolescents might impact their experiences on social media platforms, resulting in both positive and negative outcomes (Chin et al., 2023). Promoting mental health for teenagers requires an understanding of the unique sociocultural routes and social capital manifestations (O'reilly, 2020). The COVID-19 epidemic has brought attention to how crucial it is to take cultural factors into account when assessing the well-being of adolescents and to create interventions that are consistent with regional values and beliefs (Perry et al., 2023). In the digital era, it is crucial to design treatments that take into account cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors in order to build resilience and improve the mental health of teenagers.

Importance of Social Support

One important component in reducing the stress that teenagers experience from social media use is their social support system. Relatives of support with family, friends, and trustworthy adults are essential in reducing the harmful effects of social media on teenagers (Kaya et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2023). Three important elements are perceived social support, overall wellbeing, and online resilience, which all help teenagers successfully navigate the digital age (Anasuyari & Latifah, 2023; Billingsley et al., 2023). Strong support networks are associated with better mental and physical health outcomes for adolescents, particularly in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Chin et al., 2023). In the current digital age, interventions that prioritize creating peer support networks, encouraging open communication, and creating supportive environments both offline and online are essential for improving the resilience and general well-being of teenagers. Through the utilization of these connections and networks of support, teenagers can more effectively manage the difficulties presented by social media usage and form more health-conscious behaviors in the future.

Digital Literacy and Education

Comprehensive digital literacy and education programs that enable teenagers to safely and responsibly navigate the digital landscape are necessary to address the stress caused by social media. Educating people on the advantages and disadvantages of social media is essential (Balt et al., 2023; O'reilly, 2020). These programs can help parents, educators, healthcare professionals, and teenagers develop critical thinking abilities and offer useful ways for controlling online activity (Perry et al., 2023; X. Zhang, 2023). Adolescents who receive the knowledge and skills necessary to make educated decisions about their online interactions via treatments are better able to manage

social media, which may have a good impact on their mental health. Suggestions include encouraging social media usage that is responsible, assisting parents and educators in developing digital literacy, and expanding initiatives to stop cyberbullying. In the digital age, these kinds of programs are crucial to improving the wellbeing of teenagers.

Future Research Directions

Future studies should examine the longitudinal patterns of social media use and stress experienced by Indonesian teenagers, accounting for the ways that technology, social media platforms, and sociocultural elements have evolved over time. The development of evidence-based therapies and policies can be aided by longitudinal research, which can offer insightful information about the long-term consequences of social media on the mental health of adolescents. Furthermore, cross-cultural comparison research can provide insight into the cultural differences in stress and coping strategies brought on by social media use among teenagers around the globe.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study clarifies the complex connection between teenage stress levels and social media use in Indonesia. The results underline the need of addressing both the advantages and disadvantages of social media use by highlighting the dual character of social media as a source of stress and connection. Developing interventions and support systems that resonate with Indonesian adolescents and their families requires the application of culturally relevant approaches that incorporate local values and beliefs. Interventions can help reduce the negative effects of social media-induced stress and improve mental health outcomes by empowering teenagers to navigate social media responsibly, providing supportive environments, and developing digital literacy. For the purpose of informing evidence-based interventions and policies and better understanding the long-term effects of social media on teenage well-being, longitudinal research and comparative studies across various cultural contexts are required.

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