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The Impact of Social Media Use on the Development of Students' Communication Skills at Sma Negeri 6 Medan

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the level of students' communication skills in the aspects of listening, writing, and speaking in relation to the use of social media as a learning stimulus. The background of this study stems from preliminary findings that student engagement in active communication in the classroom is still low, especially in expressing opinions and comprehending information thoroughly. The research used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, involving 11 students from Medan State High School 6 as samples. Data was collected through tests, observations, and interviews. The results of the study indicate that social media can be a learning tool that supports the development of students' communication skills when strategically integrated into the learning process. These findings provide a basis for teachers to design innovative, communicative learning strategies that are tailored to the needs of students in the digital age

INTRODUCTION

Social media is an internet-based digital platform that allows users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, messages, photos, videos, and various other forms of content quickly and interactively, enabling real-time two-way communication (Oktalya et al., 2020; Rafiq, 2020).

Social media is a means of communication and marketing where users can share thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Social media can also be understood as a process of interaction between individuals by creating, sharing, exchanging, and modifying ideas or concepts in the form of virtual communication or networks (Hidayat et al., 2021; Pratidina & Mitha, 2023).

In Indonesia, social media user penetration continues to show significant growth, including among students. Recent data shows that the majority of teenagers and high school students are active social media users (APJII, 2024). This phenomenon has created a new landscape in how students interact with one another and how they access and process information (Boestam & Derivanti, 2022).

Social media offers easy access to a variety of content, enables remote collaboration, and expands friendship networks beyond physical boundaries. However, on the other hand, the use of social media also raises various concerns regarding its potential negative impacts, such as distraction from learning, a decline in face-to-face interaction, and the spread of misinformation (Aqilah et al., 2023; Hidayat, 2023; Pratidina & Mitha, 2023).

Schools, as educational institutions, play a crucial role in shaping students' character and abilities, including their learning and communication skills (Fauzi & Widiastuti, 2018). At State Senior High School 6 Medan, as a formal educational institution, students are also exposed to the massive influence of social media use.

Every day, they are exposed to various content, engage in online conversations, and build their digital identities through these platforms. Interactions that occur on social media, both positive and negative, have the potential to influence the way students absorb lessons, their ability to discuss, express opinions, and even build interpersonal relationships in the school environment. The usage patterns of students at Medan State High School 6 likely include daily use of popular platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram, with a fairly high duration

of use. These patterns are driven by learning and social motivations but also pose risks in the form of distraction and emotional well-being pressure.

Based on the results of preliminary observations conducted by the author at State High School 6 Medan, it was found that almost all students have access to and actively use social media, both at home and at school. Social media use even occurs during class hours, during breaks, or secretly while the teacher is teaching. When brief interviews were conducted with teachers and homeroom teachers, it was found that social media is no longer just a communication tool but has become part of the students' daily digital culture.

However, behind the ease of communication offered by social media, various serious communication problems have emerged in schools. One of the most striking is the decline in the ability to speak directly in public. Many students appear nervous or lack confidence when they have to present assignments in front of the class, even in small group discussions. They are more comfortable expressing their opinions through short messages or comments on social media. In terms of listening, students tend to not focus when the teacher is speaking or only listen briefly without being able to grasp the essence of the message being conveyed. This is reinforced by the findings of teachers who stated that students often give irrelevant responses or repeat incorrect explanations.

In addition, students' writing skills have also declined. From the collection of written assignments, it was found that many students had difficulty organizing their ideas coherently, connecting arguments, and using effective language. The resulting texts tended to be very short, informal, and did not conform to the rules of good written language. This is strongly suspected to be influenced by the habit of writing short messages on social media, which tend to be quick, unstructured, and use non-standard language.

Another problem that has arisen is the disruption of direct social interaction. Students gather together physically more often but are busy with their own devices. Face-to-face conversations have become minimal. Guidance counselors have also noted that some students have difficulty building empathy when communicating directly, which was previously one of the strengths of adolescent communication in schools.

In view of these conditions, this study aims to determine and analyze the extent to which social media use affects the development of communication skills among students at SMA Negeri 6 Medan. This study not only focuses on students' perceptions of social media, but also directly measures communication skills through three main aspects: listening, writing, and speaking. These three aspects are assessed through tests specifically designed to reflect students' actual abilities, rather than merely subjective opinions or assumptions.

METHODS

The research approach used is a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. According to Sugiyono 2022, descriptive qualitative research methods are based on postpositivism philosophy and are used to study natural objects where the researcher is the key instrument (Creswell, 2017).

The qualitative approach was chosen because the title of this research, "The Impact of Social Media Use on the Development of Communication Skills of Students at SMA Negeri 6 Medan," requires in-depth exploration and understanding of a social phenomenon in its natural context. This approach allows researchers to delve into the human experience of the research subjects (students and teachers) regarding their interactions with social media and its influence on the way they communicate.

This approach was taken because the researcher wanted to describe and obtain an overview of the impact of social media use on the development of communication skills among students at SMA Negeri 6 Medan by conducting tests, observations, and interviews with the research subjects.

There were 11 students who served as informants in this study, selected from a pool of 35 students, with only 11 students serving as the main reference for drawing conclusions.

In this study, the data collection technique used by the researcher was direct, without intermediaries, or directly from the research site (Sugiyono, 2015). Therefore, the data collection techniques used were as follows:

1. A written test in the form of multiple-choice questions was given to 35 students who were selected to find the 11 best students to become representatives of class XI Merdeka 2 (according to

their chosen field of study or following the Merdeka curriculum), who were selected purposively.

2. In-depth interviews with students. Then interviews with guidance counselors and homeroom teachers to obtain views on changes in student learning behavior and social interaction due to the use of social media.

3. Direct observation of student activities at school, both in class, during breaks, and social interactions outside of learning.

Data analysis is the process of systematically compiling data obtained from interviews, observations, documentation, and other relevant materials so that it is easy to understand and the findings can be communicated to the general public (Sugiyono, 2015). In this case, the researcher used the following data analysis techniques: Data Reduction, Data Display, and Conclusion Drawing/Verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Noor & Ranti, communication skills are divided into three abilities, namely listening, writing, and speaking (Noor & Ranti, 2019). In terms of listening skills, this study designed a test to determine how well students can absorb and understand verbal information. The test was conducted by presenting audio recordings of formal dialogues between students, followed by several questions to test their comprehension skills. In this context, social media has an ambivalent influence on students' listening skills. On the one hand, media such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram provide a variety of audio-visual content that can help improve listening skills. However, on the other hand, this content is often very short, lacking in depth, and does not encourage long and complex listening.

Some students seem accustomed to listening to short sound clips that do not require full concentration, such as music clips, vlogs, or light podcasts. As a result, they have difficulty when they have to listen to longer conversations that require them to grasp the information as a whole. This can be seen in students with moderate scores who tend to miss important information or are unable to understand the implied meaning in the audio. Meanwhile, students with high scores generally have more focused listening habits, whether through educational content or academic exercises.

This phenomenon is consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Phuong, which states that social media can help develop listening skills if used intensively and in a targeted manner, especially through educational podcasts and instructional content in standard language. However, without supervision, social media tends to encourage passive listening patterns that are not critical of content, focusing only on the enjoyable parts (Phuong et al., 2024).

In the school context, listening skills also reflect students' ability to concentrate. Students who often multitask while using social media, for example, scrolling and listening to music, have divided attention and are less effective at processing verbal messages. This has an impact on their test results, especially on questions that require understanding implicit meanings or conclusions based on context.

Not only that, social media also changes listening habits to be more visual. Content that is combined with text, subtitles, or animated transitions makes students not really rely on their hearing abilities. They tend not to read but rather listen. Therefore, active listening skills must be retrained systematically through direct learning methods that do not rely on visual media.

Some students revealed that they are accustomed to listening to conversations on YouTube or TikTok videos but are not accustomed to listening to formal conversations without visual aids. This proves that even though they are accustomed to audio-based media, their listening skills are not necessarily well-developed academically. Therefore, effective listening education must include audio-based exercises with evaluations that challenge deep understanding.

Given this data, teachers need to integrate quality audio content into their teaching, such as audiobooks, interviews, or simulated academic conversations. This will allow students to get used to listening attentively without relying on visual elements. This approach is in line with the principles of Self-Determination Theory that active listening is part of self-competence development that needs to be facilitated in formal learning environments (West et al., 2023).

Overall, the listening test results show that the influence of social media on listening skills is two-sided. When used educationally, social media can broaden students' auditory horizons. However, if

used excessively and passively, it actually weakens concentration and the ability to capture important information. Therefore, it is important for educators to guide the productive use of social media to support students' academic listening skills.

Next, a test was conducted on writing communication skills. In this study, it took the form of a short essay on the theme of the influence of social media on daily communication. The purpose of this test was to measure students' ability to organize ideas logically, use good paragraph structure, and apply Indonesian language rules appropriately. In the era of social media, students' written communication style has undergone a major transformation: from formal to concise, fast, and expressive. This poses a unique challenge in assessing the quality of students' writing in an academic setting.

Most students are accustomed to using abbreviations, symbols, and digital expressions such as emojis in their daily written conversations. When asked to write formally, they tend to carry these habits into their academic writing. This is reflected in the students in the intermediate category, who, despite having good ideas, lack the ability to compose paragraphs with good cohesion and coherence. They also tend to use informal diction that is not appropriate for an educational context.

Research conducted by González & Chang (2024) states that social media is a major obstacle in the development of students' formal writing skills because it directs them towards a non-standard and minimally structured writing style (González & Chang, 2024).

However, another study by Azziza (2025) states that with a reflective approach, social media can be an initial space to motivate students to practice writing consistently, especially when used for blogging or writing short stories on open platforms (Azziza, 2025).

In the context of SMA Negeri 6 Medan, students with high scores appear to have a habit of writing outside of class, whether through online forums, long captions, or written discussions in study groups. They demonstrate good paragraph structure, appropriate use of punctuation, and the ability to develop ideas clearly. In this case, social media appears to be a means of written expression that supports academic skills.

However, on the contrary, some students in the moderate category show a lack of transition from informal to formal writing. They tend to write as if they are chatting without clear paragraphs, jumping ideas, and weak narrative structure. This confirms that digital writing habits must be guided by strict academic writing education.

The solution is to integrate guided social media-based writing assignments, such as creating school blogs, reflective opinions on educational TikTok content, or writing captions that follow EBI rules. This way, students can practice writing in a medium they enjoy, but still under academic supervision.

In addition, schools can hold creative writing workshops that incorporate students' digital experiences. For example, students are asked to rewrite the content of a TikTok video into a long essay. This method allows students to move from instant communication to reflective and structured forms of communication.

Overall, the writing test results show that social media has a significant impact on students' writing style and structure. With the right approach, social media can be used as a writing tool. However, without control, it can interfere with the rules and ethics of academic communication. Therefore, consistent and relevant formal writing training in the digital world is absolutely necessary in schools.

Then, a speaking communication skills test was conducted by asking students to explain their experiences in communicating through social media orally. The assessment was based on fluency, speech structure, courage, and intonation when speaking. Social media plays an important role in influencing students' verbal abilities because platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Live, and YouTube facilitate verbal self-expression, albeit in a form that is not always formal.

Some students who actively create content or frequently broadcast live appear more confident when speaking. They demonstrate good mastery of the topic, are able to express their opinions systematically, and are not awkward in front of an audience. However, other students who are only passive users of social media tend to be nervous, less fluent, and unable to convey ideas in a structured manner. This difference illustrates that active involvement in verbal social media can strengthen direct speaking skills.

Research by Rima and Salas shows that excessive use of social media can reduce interpersonal communication skills and cause social anxiety, especially in face-to-face interactions (Sasfira & Salas, 2025). This occurs because online interactions do not require quick responses or body language, causing students to lose the nonverbal communication sensitivity that is very important in face-to-face communication.

Students in the moderate category often experience difficulties in constructing sentences verbally and lose their train of thought when speaking. This is a sign that they are not accustomed to direct communication situations that require spontaneity and quick thinking. Conversely, students who are accustomed to creating video content or giving online presentations demonstrate resilience in speaking even though they have not been formally trained in class.

In practice, social media can be a tool for developing speaking skills if it is directed towards educational activities. For example, students can create podcasts, thematic vlogs, or online discussions as speaking exercises. These verbal experiences will gradually increase their confidence to speak in the classroom or academic forums.

However, it should be noted that social media is still not a substitute for direct interaction. The ability to read the expressions of the person you are talking to, adjust your intonation, and convey arguments in a dialogical manner can only be developed through real communication experiences in physical spaces. Therefore, schools need to provide formal practice spaces for students to speak actively in activities such as debates, presentations, and group discussions.

Research by Wulandari and Fauziah also emphasizes the importance of limiting screen time to make room for direct communication, which plays an important role in the development of social skills in adolescents (Wulandari & Fauziah, 2024). This is relevant to the results at SMA Negeri 6 Medan, which show that there are still students who have not reached the high category in speaking skills.

Thus, it can be concluded that social media provides a new space for students to express themselves verbally, but it does not necessarily strengthen verbal communication as a whole. The integration of digital communication exercises and face-to-face communication remains important for

building mature, critical, and contextual speaking skills.

The use of social media has become an integral part of the lives of teenagers, including students at Medan 6 Public High School. These changes in communication patterns have a direct and indirect impact on students' communication skills. Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and YouTube have changed the way students convey and receive information, from face-to-face to more online writing and visuals.

The listening skills test administered in this study revealed that some students had difficulty listening to spoken information in depth. This was evident in their lack of ability to understand the implied meaning of long audio conversations. Conversely, students should be accustomed to listening to short audio-video clips on social media, which do not require full attention and in-depth understanding. This is in line with Yaumi's findings that brief audio consumption through social media weakens academic listening skills (Fadira et al., 2025).

In an interview with a guidance counselor at Medan State High School 6, he mentioned that most students do not have the endurance to listen for long periods of time. When listening to audio lessons or teacher instructions, they quickly lose focus, especially if the material is not presented interactively or visually. This indicates that passive digital content consumption has shifted the active listening skills needed in classroom interactions.

The homeroom teacher of class XI Merdeka 2 also said that students tend to rely on subtitles or transcripts when watching videos, so they are not accustomed to capturing information from audio alone. As a result, in the context of everyday communication or during class discussions, many students are less responsive to verbal instructions, even though they are active on social media.

However, not all impacts of social media are negative. In the same interview, the guidance counselor mentioned that some students use educational podcasts and instructional videos on YouTube as additional learning resources. They are accustomed to listening to content in both Indonesian and English, which helps hone their listening skills. Students with this habit show higher scores on listening tests.

Meanwhile, the writing test results show that 7 students are in the high category, with an overall average score of 9.9, which is in the high category. This shows that most students are able to write with excellent structure, although there is still a tendency to bring social media communication styles into academic writing.

In the observations of the homeroom teacher of class XI Merdeka 2, students very often use abbreviations in formal writing, such as “bgt” for “banget” or ‘gk’ for “nggak”, which are informal writing habits on social media. This style of writing is often carried over when they do school assignments, including when doing writing tests in this study. Social media can be an obstacle in the development of students' formal writing skills because it encourages an informal, concise, and unstructured writing style (Puspita & Susmita, 2024). However, research by Aprilia 2025 shows that social media can also be a powerful means of motivating writing. Platforms such as blogs, Instagram captions, and digital writing communities can build reflective writing skills and expand students' vocabulary.

Interviews with guidance counselors reinforced these findings. They reported that some students who had a habit of writing blogs or long captions on social media demonstrated better paragraph structure and stronger written expression skills than other students.

The speaking test showed that six students were in the high category, while five students were in the medium category. No students were in the low category. This indicates that although social media use has an influence, most students still have fairly good verbal skills. In the interview, the homeroom teacher said that students who are accustomed to creating video content such as vlogs or educational TikTok videos are more confident when speaking in front of the class. They are accustomed to structuring narratives, regulating intonation, and conveying ideas verbally, albeit informally.

Conversely, students who consume social media more passively, such as only watching or reading comments, show nervousness when speaking directly. They are less accustomed to spontaneous verbal interaction and lack the ability to construct sentences quickly and logically.

Research by Dzakri states that excessive use of social media can cause social anxiety and reduce face-to-face communication skills, because online

interactions do not train nonverbal skills such as facial expressions, eye contact, and intonation (Dzakri, 2024).

Guidance counselors report that many students feel more comfortable expressing their opinions through text messages in class WhatsApp groups than speaking directly in class discussion forums. They choose to “type” rather than speak, even when they are in the same physical space. Homeroom teachers also add that social media creates a habit of delaying communication. Students are accustomed to waiting to respond, looking for references before speaking, or even avoiding open discussions for fear of being wrong. This can reduce spontaneity and courage in communication between students.

On the positive side, students who actively use Instagram Live, YouTube, or follow student discussion podcasts appear to have higher confidence in expressing their opinions. They develop a sense of audience and are accustomed to structuring arguments verbally.

The integration of social media into learning strategies was also suggested by the guidance counselor. He recommended the use of assignments such as educational vlogs, video presentations, or online discussion simulations to gradually improve students' speaking skills.

On the other hand, the homeroom teacher emphasized that direct communication is still important. He suggested weekly discussion sessions without gadgets in the classroom to train students' courage and communication skills directly.

The test results showed that no students fell into the low category for all three skills, indicating that the impact of social media did not completely cripple students' communication skills, but many still needed guidance to move up to the high category.

The guidance counselor also said that students who are actively engaged on social media tend to have open minds, broad perspectives, and rich vocabularies, especially those who frequently write in online communities or participate in online discussion forums. However, unguided use of social media risks lowering the quality of both verbal and written communication, especially if students are only passive consumers and are accustomed to instant communication without structure.

Therefore, a pedagogical approach is needed that makes wise use of social media, guiding students to write reflectively on digital platforms, discuss

using proper grammar, and produce educational spoken content.

One of the students interviewed even stated that through TikTok, he learned to write short scripts and practice his pronunciation by re-recording several times until the results were satisfactory. This helped him during speaking exams and group presentations. This student's experience proves that social media, if used actively and creatively, can contribute to the development of communication skills. However, what is urgently needed is the support of teachers and an education system that integrates digital activities into formal learning.

Therefore, the use of social media has two contrasting effects on students' communication skills: on one hand, it strengthens self-expression and creativity; on the other hand, it reduces spontaneity, grammar, and direct interaction. The role of teachers is crucial in balancing both aspects so that students can develop communicatively in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

Research on the Impact of Social Media Use on the Development of Communication Skills among Students at SMA Negeri 6 Medan shows that social media plays a significant role in influencing and shaping students' communication skills, both in terms of listening, writing, and speaking. Based on the analysis of data from 11 students who were the research sample, it appears that the use of social media is not only part of their daily lives, but also a potential medium for improving communication skills when used appropriately in learning.

The students' communication skills were in the moderate to high category, with speaking skills scoring the highest compared to the other two aspects. This shows that students' interaction with various digital content and online communication activities, such as making videos, commenting, or discussing on social media platforms, can boost their confidence in expressing their opinions verbally. The writing aspect also shows positive development because students are accustomed to creating short texts, captions, or messages on social media, which trains their message construction skills. Meanwhile, listening skills are in a relatively lower category but still show development, especially when students are involved in consuming audio-visual content such as podcasts, educational videos, and virtual discussions.

The use of social media as a learning stimulus has proven effective in increasing student participation and motivation. Social media provides a more interactive, relevant, and appropriate space for today's digital generation. However, its use must still be guided and supervised to ensure that students gain educational benefits and do not get caught up in passive use or mere entertainment. Overall, this study confirms that social media can be a learning tool that supports the development of students' communication skills when strategically integrated into the learning process. These findings provide a basis for teachers to design innovative, communicative learning strategies that are tailored to the needs of students in the digital age.

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