

The Influence of Using Social Media as a Source of Academic Information on the Effectiveness of Student Learning

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Abstract- The development of social media has fundamentally changed the way students obtain information and learning materials outside formal classroom settings. In Indonesia, university students are among the most active social media users, spending an average of more than five hours per day on various platforms. However, its impact on learning effectiveness is not yet fully understood, particularly in the context of private higher education institutions. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of social media utilization as a source of academic information on the learning effectiveness of students at STIM Sukma Medan. This research employed a quantitative approach using descriptive and verification survey methods. Data were collected from 50 active students selected through a total sampling technique, using a Likert-scale questionnaire (1–5) distributed via Google Forms. The independent variable in this study was the utilization of social media as a source of academic information (X), measured through the dimensions of usage intensity, platform selectivity, and the quality of accessed information. The dependent variable was learning effectiveness (Y), measured through the dimensions of material comprehension, learning motivation, and completion of academic assignments. Data analysis was conducted using simple linear regression, coefficient of determination analysis, and t-test analysis. The results showed that 62% of students used social media daily for academic purposes, with TikTok (52%), Instagram (50%), and YouTube (46%) being the most dominant platforms. The regression coefficient value of 0.724 indicated a positive influence, while the coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.524 suggested that 52.4% of the variation in learning effectiveness could be explained by the utilization of social media. The t-test results showed that $t_{\text{calculated}} (7.321) > t_{\text{table}} (2.011)$ with a value of $0.000 < 0.05$, indicating that the research hypothesis was accepted. It can be concluded that the utilization of social media as a source of academic information has a positive and significant effect on the learning effectiveness of students at STIM Sukma Medan.

Keywords: Social Media; Academic Information; Learning Effectiveness; Linear Regression; STIM Sukma Medan

1. INTRODUCTION

When a student at STIM Sukma Medan opens TikTok to search for an explanation of a management concept, or watches a YouTube video before completing an assignment, they are engaging in something that has become commonplace: learning through social media. This shift is not simply a lifestyle trend, but rather a reflection of a fundamental transformation in the academic information ecosystem. Conventional textbooks and libraries remain relevant, but they now share space with digital platforms that are more responsive to the learning styles of the younger generation. STIM Sukma Medan, as an institution that continues to transform itself into a digital-based academic environment, is not immune to this dynamic.

Indonesia is recorded as one of the countries with the largest social media user base in Southeast Asia, reaching more than 167 million active users in 2023 (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2023). What caught the researchers' attention was not the total number, but its composition: the 18–24 age group most of whom are active students was recorded as the most intensive user group with an average of more than five hours per day specifically in Indonesia (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2023, p. 47). The question that arises then is not simply "how long do they use social media," but "does the duration and pattern of use actually impact how they learn and how effective their learning is?"

Several studies have attempted to answer this question, with mixed results. Al-Rahmi et al. (2022) found a positive correlation between social media use and academic performance of Malaysian students, with usage intention as a mediating variable (A. M. Al-Rahmi et al., 2022). Conversely, Al Mosharrafa et al. (2024) showed that the relationship is not direct students' mental health acts as an intermediary determining whether social media is an asset or a burden to learning. Talan et al. (2023) added another dimension: academic engagement formed through social media was shown to significantly predict student achievement. Overall, Talan's (2022) meta-analysis of 42 studies concluded a moderate effect size of 0.48. The problem is that most of these studies were conducted in developed countries with dominant platforms like Facebook and Twitter while in Indonesia, particularly among private university students, TikTok and Instagram are the primary platforms used for academic purposes. This contextual gap prompted this research.

The differences in findings between researchers above indicate three research gaps that have not been adequately addressed. First, in terms of variables: previous research has not specifically examined the role of platform selectivity and the quality of information accessed as dimensions of social media use for academic purposes most studies only measure the duration or frequency of use in general. Second, in terms of location context: almost all existing studies were conducted in developed countries or at large state universities in Indonesia, so the reality of students at private universities outside Java such as STIM Sukma Medan has never been empirically quantified. Third, in terms of the platforms studied: previous studies have been dominated by Facebook and Twitter, even though

TikTok and Instagram are currently the primary academic platforms among Indonesian students. These three gaps are the fundamental reasons why this research is necessary, as well as the basis for the novelty of the study offered. At STIM Sukma Medan, researchers observed that students actively utilize various social media platforms to support their learning activities from searching for assignment references to following concept explanations through short video content. However, this field fact has never been systematically quantified. Without empirical data, it is difficult for institutions to design targeted digital literacy policies, or for lecturers to strategically integrate social media into the teaching process. This research aims to fill this gap.

The novelty of this research lies in three aspects. First, primary data was collected directly from students at STIM Sukma Medan, so the findings reflect the reality of private universities in North Sumatra, which has been underrepresented in the literature. Second, the scope of the platforms studied is more up-to-date and relevant not just Facebook, but also TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and AI-based platforms like ChatGPT, which are now being utilized for academic purposes. Third, learning effectiveness is measured multidimensionally, encompassing cognitive (understanding of the material), affective (learning motivation), and psychomotor (ability to complete tasks) aspects. This research is expected to provide an empirical basis that can be followed up by STIM Sukma Medan's leadership in designing contextual digital literacy programs.

Thus, the main question this research aims to answer is: How significant and how does the use of social media as a source of academic information influence the learning effectiveness of STIM Sukma Medan students? The answer to this question is relevant not only to the institution but also to the students themselves in managing their digital habits more consciously and productively.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Basic Framework Research

This research employed a quantitative approach with descriptive and verification survey methods. The quantitative approach was chosen because the research aimed to measure the magnitude of the influence of one variable on another numerically and to generalize it (Sugiyono, 2022). The survey method was used to collect data from a representative sample of the population, while verification analysis was used to test the formulated hypotheses.

The independent variable (X) in this study is the use of social media as a source of academic information, which is operationalized through three dimensions: (1) intensity of use, namely the frequency and duration of access to social media for academic purposes; (2) platform selectivity, namely the ability to choose a platform that suits learning needs; and (3) quality of information accessed, namely the relevance, accuracy, and depth of the content consumed. The dependent variable (Y) is learning effectiveness, which is operationalized through: (1) understanding of lecture material; (2) motivation and involvement in learning; and (3) ability to complete academic assignments.

The proposed research hypothesis is: H1: The use of social media as a source of academic information has a positive and significant effect on the learning effectiveness of STIM Sukma Medan students. This hypothesis is based on the findings of Hosen et al. (2021) who stated that individual motivation and the influence of social media significantly improve knowledge sharing and learning outcomes, as well as the empirical findings of Al-Rahmi et al. (2022) and Al Mosharrafa et al. (2024) who support a positive relationship between targeted social media use and learning outcomes.

2.2 Theoretical Study

Social media is defined as an internet-based platform that allows users to create, share, and interact through digital content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The main characteristics of social media that are relevant in an academic context include: (1) accessibility freely available and accessible at any time; (2) interactivity enabling two-way communication and the formation of learning communities; (3) multimodality presenting information in various formats such as text, images, audio, and video; and (4) personalization recommendation algorithms that adapt content to user preferences. Indicators of social media utilization as a source of academic information in this study were measured through three dimensions: intensity of use, platform selectivity, and quality of information accessed (Al-Rahmi et al., 2022). Learning effectiveness refers to the extent to which the learning process optimally achieves its stated objectives (Sugiyono, 2022). This concept is multidimensional and cannot be measured solely through exam scores. In this study, learning effectiveness is operationalized through three indicators: (1) the cognitive dimension, namely the students' understanding of the lecture material; (2) the affective dimension, namely motivation and active involvement in the learning process; and (3) the psychomotor dimension, namely the students' ability to complete academic tasks. This multidimensional measurement is important because previous research has shown that the influence of social media varies across dimensions social media tends to have a stronger influence on motivation and engagement than on in-depth conceptual understanding (Hosen et al., 2021; Talan et al., 2023).

The theoretical basis explaining why social media can influence learning effectiveness stems from the concept of digital social interaction-based learning, which states that individuals learn through observing content and actively participating in online communities (Lim & Richardson, 2021). Social media structurally facilitates both of these mechanisms: students can observe how others solve academic problems through video content, while simultaneously interacting with online learning communities. Furthermore, Ansari and Khan (2020) emphasized that social media

supports collaborative learning by lowering communication barriers and expanding the network of learning resources beyond the confines of the formal classroom. Thus, the relationship between social media use and learning effectiveness is theoretically positive, with the caveat that the quality of use not simply the intensity is the determining factor.

2.3 Population, Sample, and Research Location

The research was conducted at STIM Sukma Medan, Jl. Sakti Lubis No. 8A, Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia from March to May 2026. The research population was all active students of the Management study program of STIM Sukma Medan. The sampling technique used total sampling with a sample size of 50 active student respondents who met the inclusion criteria: (1) registered as active students of the Management study program; (2) using social media regularly; and (3) willing to participate in the research.

2.4 Instruments and Data Collection

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), which was distributed via Google Form. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part contained questions on identity and social media usage profile (gender, study program, platform used, frequency of use); the second part contained 6 measurable statement items covering aspects of social media utilization and learning effectiveness. The statement items included: (1) social media helps understand lecture material; (2) ease of finding academic information compared to libraries; (3) distractions when using social media for learning; (4) information verification behavior; (5) social media increases learning motivation; and (6) information from social media helps with assignments. The instrument validity test was conducted using the Pearson Correlation method and the calculated r value for all items was greater than the r table (0.279) at a significance level of 5%, which means all items were declared valid. The reliability test using the Cronbach's Alpha formula obtained a value of $\alpha = 0.821$ for variable X and $\alpha = 0.836$ for variable Y, which means the instrument was declared reliable because it was above the threshold of 0.70 (Sugiyono, 2022).

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis used several statistical techniques sequentially. First, descriptive analysis to describe the respondent profile and the distribution of respondents' answers to each statement item. Second, classical assumption tests including data normality tests using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and linearity tests of relationships between variables. Third, simple linear regression analysis to estimate the equation: $Y = a + bX$, where Y is the learning effectiveness score, X is the social media utilization score, a is a constant, and b is the regression coefficient. Simple linear regression was chosen because this study only involves one independent variable (X) and one dependent variable (Y), so this method is most appropriate for measuring the magnitude and direction of the influence between variables directly and efficiently without requiring a multivariate model that is irrelevant to this research design (Sugiyono, 2022). Fourth, the coefficient of determination (R^2) test to measure the proportion of the variance in variable Y that can be explained by variable X. Fifth, the t-test to test the significance of the influence of variable X on variable Y with the criteria: H1 is accepted if $t_{\text{calculated}} > t_{\text{table}}$ or the significance value < 0.05 . All analyses were performed with the aid of SPSS software version 25.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Respondent Profile

This study involved 50 active students at STIM Sukma Medan as respondents. Based on gender, female respondents predominated at 64% (32 people) and male respondents at 36% (18 people). This finding reflects the demographic composition of STIM Sukma Medan students, which is indeed predominantly female. Based on the distribution of study programs, all 50 respondents were students in the Management program at STIM Sukma Medan. This reflects the research's focus on Management students as the target population and ensures homogeneity of respondents' academic backgrounds, allowing for greater internal comparability.

Table 1. Profile of Research Respondents (n=50)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Woman	32	64.0
	Man	18	36.0
Study program	Management	50	100.0
Frequency of Use	Every day	31	62.0
	3–5 times a week	13	26.0
	1–2 times a week	5	10.0
	Seldom	1	2.0

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

3.2 Description of Social Media Usage

The survey results show that 62% of students (31 respondents) use social media daily for academic purposes, while 26% (13 respondents) use it 3–5 times per week, and only 2% (1 respondent) rarely use it. This data confirms that social media has become an integral part of the learning routine of STIM Sukma Medan students. Regarding the platforms used, TikTok ranked first with 26 respondents (52%), followed by Instagram with 25 respondents (50%), YouTube with 23 respondents (46%), and search engines, AI tools, and LMS such as Google, ChatGPT, and Edlink with 17 respondents (34%) note: the last three platforms are not social media, but are used by students as sources of academic information and Twitter/X with 4 respondents (8%). Complete data is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Social Media Platforms Used for Academic Purposes (n=50)

Platform	Number of Users (n)	Percentage (%)	Ranking
TikTok	26	52.0	1
Instagram	25	50.0	2
YouTube	23	46.0	3
Other	17	34.0	4
Twitter/X	4	8.0	5

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

TikTok's dominance as the most widely used platform is an interesting finding. Based on open data from respondents, TikTok was chosen for its short, concise, and to-the-point content, as well as its availability of visual, easy-to-understand learning tutorials. YouTube was chosen primarily for its in-depth, long-form explanatory content, while Instagram was favored for its availability of infographics and short educational content from popular science accounts.

3.3 Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Descriptive analysis was conducted to determine respondents' perceptions of the variables of social media utilization (X) and learning effectiveness (Y). The distribution of respondents' answers to the six main statement items is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents' Answers to Questionnaire Statement Items (n=50)

Statement Items	STS (1)	TS (2)	N (3)	S (4)	SS (5)	Mean
1. Social media helps understand lecture material	5 (10%)	3 (6%)	7 (14%)	10 (20%)	25 (50%)	3.94
2. It's easier to find academic information via social media	3 (6%)	5 (10%)	8 (16%)	18 (36%)	16 (32%)	3.78
3. Often distracted when studying via social media*	4 (8%)	8 (16%)	12 (24%)	14 (28%)	12 (24%)	3.44
4. Always verify the accuracy of the information	2 (4%)	6 (12%)	11 (22%)	16 (32%)	15 (30%)	3.72
5. Social media increases learning motivation	1 (2%)	4 (8%)	9 (18%)	17 (34%)	19 (38%)	3.98
6. Social media information helps with assignments	0 (0%)	3 (6%)	7 (14%)	19 (38%)	21 (42%)	4.16

Description: STS=Strongly Disagree; TS=Disagree; N=Neutral; S=Agree; SS=Strongly Agree; *Negative item (reverse scoring)

Source: Processed primary data (2026)

The highest mean score was obtained for statement item 6 (information from social media helps with assignments) at 4.16, indicating that the majority of respondents felt the real benefits of social media in completing academic assignments. Statement item 5 (social media increases learning motivation) obtained a mean of 3.98, indicating a strong positive perception. Meanwhile, item 3 (distractions when using social media) obtained a mean of 3.44, which after reverse scoring confirmed that distractions remain a challenge that needs to be managed. Overall, the average score for variable X was 3.81 and variable Y was 4.03, both of which are included in the high category on the Likert scale used.

3.4 Classical Assumption Test

Before the regression analysis was conducted, a classical assumption test was first performed. The normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test yielded a significance value of $0.127 > 0.05$, indicating that the data were normally distributed. The linearity test was conducted using the Test for Linearity method and obtained an $F_{\text{linearity}}$ value of 52.761 with a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$, confirming a linear relationship between variables X and Y. With both assumptions met, the simple linear regression analysis can be continued.

3.5 Simple Linear Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to test the effect of social media utilization (X) on learning effectiveness (Y). The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.831	0.312	-	2,664	0.010
Utilization of Social Media (X)	0.724	0.099	0.724	7,321	0,000

Source: Results of processing SPSS 25 (2026)

Based on Table 4, the regression equation obtained is: $Y = 0.831 + 0.724X$. The constant of 0.831 is the basic value of the regression model and is not interpreted substantively because the condition of the variable X with a value of zero is not meaningful in the context of the Likert scale used. The focus of interpretation is directed at the regression coefficient of 0.724, which means that every one unit increase in the social media utilization score will increase learning effectiveness by 0.724 units. This positive coefficient value confirms the direction of the positive and meaningful influence of the variable X on Y.

3.6 Test of the Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination test is carried out to measure how much of the proportion of variation in variable Y can be explained by variable X. The results of the coefficient of determination test are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of the Determination Coefficient Test

Model	R	R Square (R^2)	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of Estimate
1	0.724	0.524	0.514	0.327

Source: Results of processing SPSS 25 (2026)

The R value of 0.724 indicates a strong relationship between variables X and Y, based on Sugiyono's (2022) correlation coefficient interpretation guidelines. The R^2 value of 0.524 indicates that 52.4% of the variation in the learning effectiveness of STIM Sukma Medan students can be explained by the variable of using social media as a source of academic information. The remaining 47.6% is explained by other variables not examined in this study, such as intrinsic motivation, self-management skills, teaching quality, and learning environment factors.

3.7 Hypothesis Testing (t-Test)

Hypothesis testing was conducted using a t-test to determine whether social media utilization significantly impacts learning effectiveness. Based on Table 4, the calculated t value is 7.321 with degrees of freedom (df) = $n - 2 = 50 - 2 = 48$ and a significance level of 5% (two-tailed), the t table value is 2.011. Since the calculated t table (7.321) > t table (2.011) and the significance value is $0.000 < 0.05$, H_1 is accepted. These results indicate that in the context of STIM Sukma Medan students, social media is an important source of academic information and has a measurable influence on learning effectiveness. Easy access to information through digital platforms allows students to obtain additional materials outside the formal learning process, respond to academic questions in real-time, and learn from instructors outside the campus environment. The regression coefficient value of 0.724, which is quite large, reflects that every increase in the quality and intensity of academic social media use has a real impact on the effectiveness of student learning not just a weak relationship or statistical coincidence.

3.8 Discussion

This study's finding that social media use has a positive and significant effect on learning effectiveness ($\beta = 0.724$; sig. = 0.000) is consistent with several recent studies, but with nuances that warrant further examination. Al-Rahmi et al. (2022) did find a positive relationship between social media use and academic performance in Malaysia, but they emphasized that targeted usage intentions were the key determinant not simply frequency of access. This finding is relevant when compared to the pattern seen in this study's data: the highest-scoring items were related to concrete benefits such as helping with assignments (mean = 4.16) and increasing learning motivation (mean = 3.98), rather than simply accessing information. This means that STIM Sukma Medan students appear to be using social media for quite specific academic purposes, rather than simply passive content consumption.

The dominance of TikTok (52%) as the primary academic platform is a finding that deserves special attention. This is not simply a matter of the platform's popularity, but rather reflects students' changing cognitive preferences for content formats: short, visual, and to the point. Boulianne and Theocharis (2020) anticipated this trend by noting the increasing popularity of short video-based media as an informal learning medium among younger generations. However, on the other hand, this same format carries risks. Malik et al. (2022) found that social media distractions negatively impact academic performance, and this study's data confirms these concerns: 52% of respondents (item 3, mean = 3.44 before reverse scoring) admitted to frequently being distracted when using social media for studying. This suggests that the same platform can serve as both a learning tool and a source of distraction, depending entirely on the user's self-regulation abilities.

The R^2 value of 0.524 obtained by this study is above the average effect size (0.48) reported in Talan's (2022) meta-analysis. This difference is likely not coincidental. The study population was relatively homogeneous all respondents were Management students at a single institution so the variation in academic background that typically dampens the effects of social media in multi-institutional studies was more controlled here. Shafiq and Parveen (2023), who studied university students in Pakistan, found a similar finding: when the sample was more homogeneous in terms of digital engagement, the influence of social media on academic performance tended to be stronger. This finding indicates that institutional context and population characteristics need to be taken into account when interpreting the magnitude of the influence of social media on learning.

A key takeaway from these findings is that the positive impact of social media does not emerge spontaneously. Perez-Sanagustin et al. (2023) emphasize that integrating social media into higher education requires a clear pedagogical framework not simply allowing students to freely access platforms and hoping for positive results. In the context of STIM Sukma Medan, this means that institutional leaders need to consider several concrete steps: first, incorporating a digital literacy module into compulsory courses so that students are not only skilled at using the platforms but also able to evaluate the reliability of the information they find; second, encouraging lecturers to design assignments that explicitly utilize platforms like TikTok or YouTube as supplementary learning resources; and third, developing institutional guidelines that help students define the boundaries between productive social media use and those that potentially disrupt their learning.

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides clear empirical evidence that the use of social media as a source of academic information has a positive and significant impact on the learning effectiveness of STIM Sukma Medan students. The research hypothesis was statistically accepted, with a regression coefficient of 0.724 and the model's ability to explain 52.4% of the variation in learning effectiveness. In terms of digital behavior, the majority of students (62%) have used social media daily for academic purposes, with TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube as the dominant platforms. More important than these numbers is their significance: STIM Sukma Medan students have gone beyond using social media for entertainment and have begun to utilize it as part of their daily learning strategies. These findings apply to the specific context of STIM Sukma Medan and are not intended to be generalized to all Indonesian students. The results of this study have practical implications that can be directly acted upon by the institution. First, STIM Sukma Medan can consider integrating social media as a formal learning support medium into the curriculum, for example through assignments based on TikTok or YouTube content curated by lecturers. Second, a digital information literacy program should be incorporated into compulsory courses so that students are not only skilled at accessing platforms but also able to evaluate the reliability and relevance of the information they find. Third, lecturers need to be equipped with training on how to utilize students' social media ecosystems as a bridge between informal and formal learning, so that their potential can be optimized pedagogically. However, the 47.6% of variation in learning effectiveness that remains unanswered by this model is a reminder that social media is only one factor in a broader learning ecosystem. Self-regulation, teaching quality, and digital literacy are variables that need to be explored as moderators or mediators in future research. The limitations of this study covering a single institution with 50 respondents from a single study program limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, further studies involving samples across institutions and study programs, using more detailed multidimensional instruments per indicator of learning effectiveness, and integrating moderator variables such as self-regulated learning, would be invaluable in strengthening and expanding the knowledge base in this area.

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