The Impact of Online Interactions on Mental Health among Adolescents in West Java

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ABSTRACT

Using a quantitative methodology, this study explores the complex relationship between teenage psychological wellness and digital social networking in West Java. A varied group of 250 teenagers took part, offering insights on their use of digital devices and mental well-being. The study identifies complex relationships between online experiences and psychological wellbeing, emphasizing both positive and negative correlations. The results highlight the importance of context-specific knowledge, given the diversity of West Java's culture and population. With implications for theory, practice, and future research, the study adds to the expanding body of knowledge regarding the effects of digital social networking on the mental health of adolescents.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of social networking platforms on human interaction, especially among young people, is significant. In West Java, the diverse youth population has experienced a dynamic shift in social dynamics due to digital connectivity. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have provided both opportunities and challenges for adolescents' psychological well-being [1]. Digital connectivity has enabled unprecedented access to information and brought people together in new ways. However, it has also created challenges such as information overload and the spread of misinformation [1]. In West Java, social media has affected youth participation in various aspects, including sports [2]. The use of second-hand mobile phones has exposed youth in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods to digital media content, highlighting the importance of digital media literacy [3].

Adolescent psychological well-being is associated with social media awareness and use [4], [5][6]. As mindfulness increases, psychological well-being increases, and time spent on the internet decreases. Although social media use did not have a mediating role in the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being, time spent on the internet did [6].

Social media platforms have also been adopted as ministry tools in churches around the world, aiming to foster a sense of community (koinonia) among believers [7]. However, it remains unclear whether these platforms can effectively promote koinonia [7].

Digital social networks can have both positive and negative impacts on adolescents’ mental health. On one hand, these platforms offer opportunities for self-expression, social
support, and identity formation [8]. On the other hand, they also carry risks related to cyberbullying, social comparison, and information overload [8].

Research has shown that the relationship between online communication and mental health can vary depending on factors such as gender and the type of online communication. For example, a study conducted in Iceland found that while depression worsened for adolescent females between 2003 and 2015, an association between time spent online communicating and mental health emerged for them in 2015, which did not exist in 2003 [9].

Another study found that frequent online communication with best friends and larger friendship groups was associated with higher levels of well-being, while frequent online contact with virtual friends made online was negatively associated with well-being, particularly for girls [10]. Moreover, digital mental health tools leveraging social networks have shown promise in reducing stigma and fostering peer support [11]. However, limited understanding of such comprehensive programs and their implementation exists, and more research is needed to fully understand the potential relationship between digital social networks and mental health [12].

West Java is the subject of this study, which takes into consideration its distinct cultural, social, and economic setting. Similar to adolescents everywhere, teenagers in West Java are engrossed in an unparalleled and demanding digital environment. Comprehending the subtleties of how digital social networks impact their mental health is essential for developing interventions, support networks, and policies that are customized to the specific circumstances of the community.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Digital Social Networking and Teens

The terrain of teenage sociability has shifted due to the widespread use of digital social networking sites. Teenagers utilize social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat from an early age to interact, communicate, and create their identities [13], [14]. According to published research, these platforms are crucial for forming social bonds, giving people a voice, and encouraging a feeling of community [15]–[18]. The kind and volume of these contacts differ, though, and this has an impact on psychological effects [19].

Teenagers participate in a broad range of online activities, from sharing personal experiences to joining online communities, according to research. Although there may be some cultural differences that need to be investigated, it is anticipated that teenagers in West Java would use digital social networking at a rate that is similar to worldwide trends. Determining how these platforms affect psychological well-being requires an understanding of the trends and driving forces behind teenagers' use of them [17], [18], [20]–[23].

2.2 Good Mental Health in Adolescence

Adolescence is a crucial time marked by significant changes in social, emotional, and cognitive development. During this stage, psychological well-being takes several forms, including aspects like social interactions, emotion control, and self-worth [13], [24], [25]. The body of research emphasizes how crucial it is to have good mental health outcomes in adolescence since these set the stage for future wellbeing [21], [26]. On the other hand, difficulties that arise during this time, such as emotional anguish and mental health issues, may persist throughout adulthood [27]–[29].

Numerous elements, such as familial ties, peer dynamics, and self-perception, have been studied in relation to adolescents’ psychological well-being [30]–[32]. Comprehending
these variables offers a structure for assessing the possible influence of virtual social networks on mental consequences [33]. The purpose of the literature review is to summarize current research in order to characterize psychological well-being aspects that are pertinent to this study [34]–[36].

2.3 Historical Research on Mental Health and Digital Social Networks

Numerous research have been done to look into the connection between teenage mental health outcomes and digital social networks [37]–[40]. Mixed results have been found in the research; some point to benefits like improved self-esteem and social support, while others point to drawbacks including anxiety, social comparison, and cyberbullying [38], [41]–[44].

Previous studies have employed a variety of methodological techniques, such as cross-sectional surveys and longitudinal investigations. The nature of online involvement can be understood by considering the focus of certain studies on particular platforms or types of interactions. Crucially, the literature review will analyze these studies’ methodology and results critically, pointing out any gaps and contradictions that emphasize the necessity of conducting context-appropriate research [38], [41], [45]–[47].

2.4 West Javan Adolescents in a Cultural Context

West Java offers a distinctive perspective on the research of digital social networks and psychological well-being because of its diverse cultural heritage and ever-changing socioeconomic environment. Teenagers' experiences and opinions of internet interactions are significantly shaped by cultural variables. To contextualize this study within the unique circumstances of West Java, it is imperative to comprehend the ways in which cultural norms, values, and traditions intersect with the digital landscape.

The study of the literature will look at previous studies that looked at how culture affects teenage development and mental health. Research that has examined the relationship between cultural variables and digital social networks will receive special attention since it may offer insight into potential differences in the effects of online interactions on psychological well-being in various cultural contexts.

2.5 The Framework of Theory

We'll talk about the theoretical framework that guided this investigation, which offers a conceptual framework for analyzing the results. The ways in which teenagers interact with and are impacted by digital social networks can be explained by social cognitive theories like Social Identity Theory and Social Comparison Theory. Including pertinent theoretical viewpoints deepens the investigation and helps to generate theories regarding possible connections between online interactions and psychological well-being.

3. METHODS

This research utilized a cross-sectional quantitative study design to investigate the relationship between digital social networks and psychological well-being among adolescents in West Java. The cross-sectional approach was chosen for its ability to capture a snapshot of participants' experiences, making it possible to examine patterns and associations at a specific point in time. This design is well suited to explore the direct impact of digital social networks on psychological well-being.

3.1 Participants

This study aims to recruit a diverse and representative sample of adolescents aged 13 to 18 years old.
from different regions in West Java. Stratified random sampling will be used to ensure proportional representation across urban and rural areas, socio-economic backgrounds, and Education levels, a total of 250 participants are involved in this study.

3.2 Data Collection

Data were collected through a structured survey designed to capture key variables related to digital social networking and psychological well-being. The survey instrument included standardized scales and customized questions developed based on the specific objectives of the study. Surveys were conducted in schools, community centers, and other appropriate locations, with a focus on obtaining consent from participants and, where possible, their parents or guardians.

The survey instrument consisted of validated scales and items selected or adapted from existing instruments. For digital social networking patterns, questions could explore the frequency of use of the platform, the nature of interactions, and the emotional impact of online experiences. Measures of psychological well-being could include existing scales to assess self-esteem, anxiety, and general mental health.

3.3 Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis involves a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations and frequency distributions, will provide an overview of the sample characteristics and key variables. Inferential statistics, including correlation analysis and regression analysis, will be used to explore the relationship between digital social networking patterns and psychological well-being. Moderation and mediation analyses may be conducted to identify factors and mechanisms that could potentially influence the observed relationships.

SPSS statistical software is used for data analysis, and the significance level will be set at $p < 0.05$. Subgroup analyses can be conducted to explore variation across demographic factors.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

1. Respondent Demographics

The study involved 250 adolescents from various backgrounds in West Java. The sample showed a balanced distribution across age groups, with a slight majority in the 15-16 age range. This distribution allows for a comprehensive insight into the impact of digital social networks on psychological well-being across different developmental stages.

The gender distribution shows relatively equal representation, facilitating analyses that consider both male and female perspectives. This balance is crucial for identifying potential gender-specific patterns in online interactions and mental health outcomes. The socioeconomic status distribution shows a diverse sample, which includes adolescents from various economic backgrounds. This diversity is critical to understanding how economic factors may influence digital social networking patterns and associated psychological outcomes.

2. Digital Social Networking Patterns

The survey data indicates extensive engagement with digital social networking platforms among adolescents in
West Java. Preliminary analysis shows that most adolescents use social media daily, with platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp being the most popular. The frequency and duration of online interactions varied, with most reporting spending more than two hours per day on social media.

3. Psychological Wellbeing

Adolescents’ psychological well-being was assessed through various dimensions, including self-esteem, anxiety levels and overall mental health. Preliminary analyses showed a wide range of mental health outcomes, with variation across demographic factors. Notably, self-esteem appeared to be influenced by online interactions, with those who reported more positive experiences online showing higher self-esteem scores.

4. The Relationship between Digital Social Networking and Psychological Wellbeing

Correlation analysis revealed nuanced relationships between digital social networking patterns and psychological well-being. Positive correlations were found between several types of online interactions, such as supportive communication and positive content consumption, and indicators of psychological well-being. In contrast, negative correlations were found for experiences of cyberbullying and excessive comparison with peers.

5. Moderating Factors

Subgroup analyses explored potential moderating factors, including socioeconomic status and cultural background. These analyses aimed to uncover variations in the impact of digital social networks on psychological well-being based on demographic characteristics.

4.2 Discussion

1. Comparison with Previous Research

The findings of this study are in line with and extend existing research on digital social networks and adolescent mental health. The positive correlation between supportive online interactions and psychological well-being is consistent with research highlighting the role of online social support [30], [32], [34], [41], [46], [48]-[51]. However, this study also identified specific nuances in the West Javanese cultural context that shaped this relationship, emphasizing the need for specific investigations in the region.

2. Implications for Theory

The results of this study contribute to the theoretical framework, supporting aspects of social cognitive theory such as Social Identity Theory and Social Comparison Theory. The positive correlation between positive online interactions and psychological well-being is in line with the theory that online experiences can contribute positively to identity formation and self-esteem. However, negative correlations highlight the potential detrimental effects of certain online experiences, challenging assumptions about universally positive outcomes.

3. Practical Implications

The practical implications of the study’s findings for parents, educators, and mental health professionals working with teenagers in West Java are noteworthy. Targeted interventions are based on insights regarding particular patterns and connections. It is
advised to implement strategies that support digital literacy, foster healthy online relationships, and deal with cyberbullying. This report also highlights how crucial it is to involve parents and educators in encouraging safe online conduct and helping teenagers navigate the digital world.

4.3 Limitations and Future Directions

It is acknowledged that this study has limitations due to its cross-sectional design and dependence on self-report data. More objective measurements of digital social networking patterns and a longitudinal strategy to investigate causal linkages could be beneficial for future research. Furthermore, qualitative research techniques can supplement quantitative results by offering more in-depth understandings of the subjective experiences of teenagers in West Java. The West Javan cultural background has come to light as a significant determinant of the association between psychological well-being and digital social networks. Adolescents' interactions with online platforms and interpretations of their experiences are influenced by cultural norms, beliefs, and expectations. This emphasizes how crucial it is to take cultural context into account while doing research and developing interventions pertaining to mental health and digital social networks.

5. CONCLUSION

In summary, this research provides insightful information on the complex relationship between teenage psychological wellbeing and digital social networking in West Java. The results highlight the need for a nuanced understanding by revealing a complicated landscape where beneficial online interactions coexist with possible drawbacks. The demographic study highlights the range of experiences and stresses how crucial it is for treatments and policies to take age, gender, socioeconomic level, and cultural background into account. Among the practical ramifications are the creation of focused educational initiatives that support digital literacy, mental health awareness, and constructive online conduct. The report also emphasizes how important it is for parents, teachers, and mental health specialists to provide continuing assistance as their children navigate the always changing digital environment.

It is important to recognize the study's limitations, such as its cross-sectional design and dependence on self-reported data, even though the findings add to theoretical frameworks. Future studies should investigate these connections over an extended period of time and use qualitative techniques to better understand the adolescent participants' subjective experiences. Essentially, this study contributes to our understanding of the relationship between digital, social, and psychological factors while laying the groundwork for customized treatments that promote safe online spaces and assist teenagers' psychological health in the distinct setting of West Java.

REFERENCES


