

The Impact of Social Media on the Psychological Well-Being of Generation Z

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This study aimed to determine the impact of social media use on psychological well-being among Generation Z. The participants were 182 university students in Yogyakarta, aged 19–24 years, who were classified as members of Generation Z. This quantitative descriptive study used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), with data analyzed in SmartPLS 3. The results showed a correlation between social media use and psychological well-being among Generation Z. Social media use explained 13.5% of the variance in psychological well-being, while the remaining 86.5% was explained by variables not included in the model. The study concluded that social media use had a significant effect on the psychological well-being of Generation Z.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become closely integrated into the lives of all generations, including Generation Z (Çoklar & Tatli, 2021; Kilinc et al., 2023; Tarhan & Unal, 2022; Tutgun-Ünal, 2021). It is now difficult to imagine everyday life without social media (Cumhur & Çam, 2021). Internet-based channels allow people to present themselves to a wider audience through synchronous and asynchronous communication (Fernandez et al., 2022; Hechanova et al., 2023; Osman, 2022; Riel et al., 2022; Yaraş & Öztürk, 2022).

Social media use has increased from year to year. Based on data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2023), Indonesia's internet penetration rate increased from 77.02% in 2022 to 78.19% in 2023. APJII also reported the most frequently used social media platforms: YouTube (65.41%), Facebook (60.24%), Instagram (30.51%), TikTok (26.80%), WhatsApp (1.57%), Twitter (0.91%), SnackVideo (0.17%), LinkedIn (0.06%), and Google (0.03%). APJII further reported daily time spent on social media: less than 1 hour (12.41%), 1–2 hours (46.16%), 2–3 hours (25.14%), 3–4 hours (8.46%), and more than 4 hours (7.84%). Social media use among members of Generation Z who are in

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early adulthood has a variety of impacts (McDool et al., 2016; L. Y. Lin et al., 2016). Positive impacts of social media use for Generation Z include easier social connection (Priporas et al., 2019), opportunities for self-actualization (Dunas & Vartanov, 2020), greater access to education (Çoklar & Tatli, 2021), increased brain activity and changes in thinking style (Raheel et al., 2019), increased self-esteem, and reduced depression (Roberts & David, 2020).

Social media use also has negative impacts on Generation Z, including sleep disorders (Evers et al., 2020), decreased academic achievement (Evers et al., 2020), decreased participation in community life (Kilinc et al., 2023), feelings of envy, depression, and decreased self-esteem (Y. Kim et al., 2017). Intensive interaction between individuals and social media affects psychological well-being (Fard et al., 2023; Agrawal & Krishna, 2021; Nikbin et al., 2021; Veraksa et al., 2021; Bano et al., 2019).

Based on these impacts, this study aimed to determine how social media use affects the psychological well-being of Generation Z. Thus, the study contributes to understanding the relationship between social media use and the psychological well-being of Generation Z. It also provides new knowledge about the extent to which social media use may affect the psychological well-being of Generation Z.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Generation Z and Social Media Use

Generation Z was born amid rapid technological development (Çoklar & Tatli, 2021; Ninan et al., 2020). As a result, members of Generation Z use digital technology frequently (Liu et al., 2021; Munsch, 2021). One digital technology often accessed by Generation Z is social media (Mohamed & Nithya, 2022; Priporas et al., 2019), which is used to connect and share information with others (Taibi et al., 2023).

Social media consists of web-based digital platforms that support public or semipublic interaction within online social networks (Choi & Noh, 2020; Yue et al., 2021). These platforms have influenced interpersonal communication by allowing individuals to create profiles, connect with other users, and create and exchange content (Y. Lin et al., 2023; Tuck & Thompson, 2023; Yue et al., 2023).

Several types of social media are commonly used, including Facebook (social networking media; B. Kim & Kim, 2019), Instagram (photo- and video-sharing media; Mccosker et al., 2020), Twitter (microblogging media; Hermida & Mellado, 2020), Pinterest (media for sharing ideas, photos, and short videos), Snapchat (instant messaging and photo applications; Rice et al., 2019), WhatsApp (communication media; Boczek & Koppers, 2020), and Google+ (interest-oriented media; Voorveld et al., 2018).

Social media use is associated with communication, friendship, and self-disclosure activities (H. Chen & Li, 2017). By keeping users connected, social media can affect their social lives (Joshi et al., 2023). Social media use may have benefits as well as risks (Taibi et al., 2023), and it has been associated with users' psychological well-being (Aksar et al., 2022; Bano et al., 2019; Bruggeman et al., 2019; Y. A. Chen et al.,

2022; Dhir et al., 2018; Granow et al., 2018; Guo & Chen, 2022; Joshi et al., 2023; Kiran et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2014; Y. Lin et al., 2023; Oosten et al., 2023; Sean et al., 2021; Yue et al., 2021, 2023).

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct used to evaluate individuals' functioning and quality of life (Ryff et al., 1999). Ryff integrated earlier perspectives into six dimensions of psychological well-being (Páez-Gallego et al., 2020; Ryff, 1989). These dimensions were derived from conceptualizations of life-span development, mental health, and personal growth (Ryff & Essex, 1992).

The six dimensions are self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989, 1991; Ryff & Essex, 1992; Ryff & Heincke, 1983; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryff et al., 1999, 2004). Self-acceptance refers to a positive attitude toward oneself and acceptance of both positive and negative aspects of one's life. Positive relations with others involve warm, trusting, and mutually supportive relationships. Autonomy refers to independence, self-determination, resistance to social pressure, and self-evaluation according to personal standards. Environmental mastery involves competence in managing one's environment and using available opportunities effectively. Purpose in life refers to having goals, direction, and a sense of meaning. Personal growth involves continued development, openness to new experiences, realization of one's potential, and willingness to change (Ryff, 1991, 1995; Ryff et al., 1999). In this study, these six dimensions were used to assess psychological well-being among Generation Z social media users.

Overview of the Present Studies

Several previous studies are relevant to the present research. Y. Lin et al. (2023) found that social media use can have both positive and negative effects on psychological well-being, although psychological anxiety was more prominent. Yue et al. (2023) reported strong associations between social media use and stress, depression, and somatic symptoms. Krishna and Agrawal (2023) found a significant relationship between cyberloafing and psychological well-being. In contrast, Taibi et al. (2023) found no significant relationship between adolescents' conscious social media use and psychological well-being.

Goal and Hypotheses

Recent research has reported positive, negative, and nonsignificant associations between social media use and psychological well-being. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between social media use and psychological well-being among Generation Z.

RQ1: How does social media use affect the psychological well-being of Generation Z?

There are different results of studies on the impact of social media use on individual psychological well-being. The research conducted focuses on the study of Generation Z who have been born in the midst of technological advances. The latest findings produce positive impacts,

negative impacts and no impact on the use of social media on *the psychological well-being* of individuals.

H1: There is a relationship between social media use and the psychological well-being of Generation Z.

METHOD

The participants were members of Generation Z aged 19–24 and enrolled as students in Yogyakarta. A total of 182 students participated in this study. The research procedure began with the creation and online distribution of the SMU scale (social media use) and the PWB scale (psychological well-being). Participants provided informed consent before completing the measurement scales. The scales contained descriptions and instructions for completion. Participants were informed that the study examined the impact of social media use on psychological well-being. They were also asked to provide demographic information, such as age and gender. This study was designed to examine the relationship between social media use and psychological well-being and the factors that influence it.

This study used two measures: the 18-item Social Media Use (SMU) scale and an 18-item Psychological Well-Being (PWB) scale adapted from Ryff. Data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 3. PLS-SEM was considered appropriate because it can test models involving direct relationships between variables (Hair et al., 2021).

RESULTS

Validity and Reliability Test

The convergent validity analysis showed factor loadings greater than .50, resulting in a model with five PWB indicators and five SMU indicators.

Table 1
Cross-Loadings

Indicator	PWB	SMU
PWB1	.577	–.227
PWBHP1	.762	–.252
PWBHP3	.730	–.283
PWBPD	.743	–.291
PWBPL1	.720	–.232
SMUBK1	–.227	.650
SMUBK2	–.240	.666
SMUBP1	–.292	.795
SMUBP2	–.307	.827
SMUBP3	–.257	.683

Note. PWB = psychological well-being; SMU = social media use.

After the SmartPLS analysis, 5 of the original 18 PWB items and 5 of the original 17 SMU items were retained. Possible reasons for the item reduction include weak items, a limited sample size, and inaccurate responses to the scales.

Based on the validity test on the Psychological Well Being scale instrument, 5 items out of 18 items were obtained after SmartPLS analysis was carried out. This is possible due to poor items, participants who still need to be added, and the large number of participants who do not fill in the scale correctly. Meanwhile, on the SMU scale, 5 items were obtained out of 17 items.

Table 2

Reliability of the SMU and PWB Scales

Scale	Cronbach's α
PWB	.750
SMU	.776

Note. PWB = psychological well-being; SMU = social media use.

Cronbach's alpha was .750 for the PWB scale and .776 for the SMU scale. Both values exceeded the study's .60 criterion and indicated acceptable internal consistency.

Based on the table, the result was obtained with a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.750 on the PWB scale with an $\alpha > 0.6$ value, so that it has a high reliability value. Meanwhile, on the SMU scale, a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.776 was obtained, a value > 0.6 , so that the reliability was also high.

Frequency and Duration of Social Media Use

Table 3 presents the distributions of social media use and psychological well-being scores.

Table 3

Frequency of Social Media Use and Psychological Well-Being Among Generation Z

Category	Social Media Use (%)	Psychological Well-Being (%)
Low	80.8	0.0
Moderate	18.7	48.4
High	0.5	51.6

Note. Values are percentages.

As shown in the table, 80.8% of respondents had a low level of social media use, 18.7% had a moderate level, and 0.5% had a high level. No respondents were in the low category of psychological well-being; 48.4% of Generation Z respondents had moderate psychological well-being, and 51.6% had high psychological well-being.

Table 4
Duration of Social Media Use

Category	Percentage
Low	29.1
Moderate	45.6
High	25.3

Note. Values are percentages.

Based on the results, the duration of social media use in respondents 29.1% was included in the low category, 45.6% was medium, and 25.3% used the internet with a high duration.

Relationship Between Social Media Use and Psychological Well-Being The Relationship between Social Media Use and Generation Z's Psychological Well-Being

Table 5
Relationship Between Social Media Use and Psychological Well-Being

Path	Original Estimate	Bootstrap Mean	SE	t	p
SMU → PWB	-.366	-.382	.059	6.172	< .001

Note. PWB = psychological well-being; SMU = social media use; SE = standard error.

Based on the correlational analysis conducted in SmartPLS, the effect of social media use on psychological well-being was statistically significant, $p < .001$. The relationship was negative: lower levels of social media use were associated with higher psychological well-being, whereas higher levels of social media use were associated with lower psychological well-being.

Table 6
Coefficient of Determination for Psychological Well-Being

Outcome	R ²	Adjusted R ²
PWB	.135	.126

Note. PWB = psychological well-being.

The inner-model analysis yielded $R^2 = .135$, indicating that social media use explained 13.5% of the variance in psychological well-being. Variables not included in the model accounted for the remaining 86.5%.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of social media use on the psychological well-being of Generation Z by examining the relationship between social media use and psychological well-being. This study used the SMU scale and the PWB (psychological well-being) scale. Based on the validity and reliability tests conducted in SmartPLS, the PWB scale was reduced from 18 items to 5 items, and the SMU scale was reduced from 17 items to 5 items. Possible reasons for the item reduction include an insufficient number of items, a limited number of participants, and participants' inaccurate completion of the scales.

The results of this study showed that social media use affected the psychological well-being of Generation Z. The relationship between these

variables was statistically significant, $p < .001$. These results indicate that the study addressed its research question and supported its hypothesis.

Furthermore, this study explains that the relationship formed between these two variables is a negative relationship. This negative relationship can be interpreted as if there is an increase in psychological well-being, there is a decrease in the intensity of social media use and if there is an increase in the intensity of social media use, there is a decrease in psychological well-being. Specifically, the percentage of influence between the two variables is explained in more detail in the R square test. Based on the R square test, it was found that the use of social media affected the psychological well-being of Generation Z by 13.5% and the remaining 86.5% was influenced by other variables that are not yet known.

The results of this study support some of the results of research that has been done before. The results of this study are in line with the results of research conducted by (Veraksa et al., 2021) which resulted in that factors of social media use, such as the amount of time spent on social networking sites and the number of friends, were associated with increased social media integration and increased online risk. Along with increased risk and the incorporation of social media in adolescents' lives, their subjective psychological well-being declines. Another study that results that the use of social media has a negative correlation with the psychological well-being of its users is a study conducted by (Y. Lin et al., 2023) which results that the use of social media triggers more psychological anxiety of its users.

However, the results of this study do not support the results of research conducted by (Böhmer, 2022) which resulted in that there was no significant direct correlation between the dependent variable psychological well being and the independent variable of social media use. This study also does not support previous research that resulted in no difference after intervention between social media use and students' psychological well-being (Taibi et al., 2023). Another study that is not in line with this study is research that results in that the use of social media is positively related to psychological well being so that the use of social media can be used to prevent suicides because high psychological well being is negatively related to suicide (Choi & Noh, 2019).

Other studies have found that excessive movie watching can have both good and bad effects on users' psychological well being. Watching movies can increase viewers' enjoyment, recovery experience, and vitality by giving them more freedom, but it can also lead to goal conflicts and feelings of guilt, which can reduce psychological well being (Granow et al., 2018). Furthermore, a study on the role of social media in relation to body image and psychological well-being found that information seeking on social media had a negative impact on body image, but self-status seeking and socializing on social media did not negatively impact body image. Body image also influences the level of psychological well-being through self-esteem, which in turn improves psychological well-being (Lee et al., 2014).

Research with the title "The Contribution of Mobile Social Media to Social Capital and Psychological Well-Being: Examining the Role of Communicative Use, Friending and Self Disclosure" shows that

communicative use and self-disclosure in mobile social media are positively associated with bonding capital that bridges psychological well-being. friendship relationships also have a positive relationship with bridging capital, but not with psychological well-being bonding capital. in addition, bonding capital and bridging capital mediate the relationship between social media use and psychological well-being (H. Chen & Li, 2017).

Previous research has also highlighted the intensity of social media use based on gender. The results showed that there are differences in social media needs between women and men. Thus, a significant moderating effect of gender was found on the relationship between social media needs and psychological well-being. The adjusted R² for male psychological well being level in this model was 0.701, indicating that male need for social media accounted for 70% of male psychological well being (Aksar et al., 2022).

The difference in the results of this study is most likely due to the multidimensional nature contained in the theory of psychological well-being. One dimension of psychological well being is positive relations with others, which means individuals have good relationships with others. Individuals who use social media and have a high level of positive relations with others may also have high psychological well being as well. However, if individuals do not have a highly positive relationship with others, then the use of social media to socialize with others will be negatively correlated with the psychological well-being of its users.

Limitation and Future Research

This study had several limitations that may have affected its results. First, the sample was relatively small, so future research should include more participants. Second, the participants were limited to members of Generation Z who were students in Yogyakarta; future studies should include a broader range of participants. Third, the scales were completed online, so the researchers could not monitor the conditions under which participants responded. Some participants may therefore have completed the scales carelessly, which could have affected the results. Fourth, the study lasted only 2 weeks, which limited the depth of the analysis. Future research should use longitudinal designs to provide a more in-depth analysis.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between social media use and psychological well-being among Generation Z. The results showed a negative relationship: lower social media use was associated with higher psychological well-being, whereas higher social media use was associated with lower psychological well-being. Social media use explained 13.5% of the variance in users' psychological well-being.

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