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Peran Media Sosial dalam Membangun Kesadaran Kesehatan Mental Generasi Z

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ABSTACT

The study purpose was to examine the role of social media in increasing mental health awareness among Generation Z. As a digital-native cohort, Gen Z relies heavily on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) for information, connection, and self-expression. While these platforms can serve as tools for mental health education and peer support, excessive use has also been linked to increased anxiety, depression, and poor self-image. This study seeks to explore the dual function of social media both as a supportive environment and as a risk factor for mental well-being in young people.
This study employed a systematic literature review method by analyzing 20 scientific articles published between 2019 and 2025. Articles were collected from databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and accredited national journals (SINTA), focusing on studies that discuss mental health, social media, and Generation Z. Inclusion criteria included research articles with relevant themes, peer-reviewed status, and publications in either Indonesian or English.
The findings reveal that while prolonged passive social media use contributes to increased symptoms of anxiety and depression, intentional and informed use can promote mental health awareness. Effective strategies identified in the reviewed literature include storytelling, peer support groups, the use of micro-influencers, and the delivery of accessible mental health content in visual and interactive formats.
Social media plays a complex role in Gen Z's mental health landscape. To maximize its potential for positive impact, digital literacy and empathetic communication strategies must be integrated into public health and educational initiatives. Collaborative efforts between educators, content creators, and policy makers are essential in building a supportive and safe digital environment for youth.

Keywords**:** Social Media, Mental Health, Generation Z, Digital Awareness. Media Literacy

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ABSTRACT

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji peran media sosial dalam meningkatkan kesadaran kesehatan mental di kalangan Generasi Z. Sebagai generasi yang lahir dan tumbuh bersama teknologi digital, Gen Z sangat bergantung pada platform seperti Instagram, TikTok, dan X (dahulu Twitter) untuk mendapatkan informasi, menjalin koneksi sosial, serta mengekspresikan diri. Meskipun media sosial dapat menjadi alat edukatif dan ruang dukungan sebaya (peer support), penggunaan yang berlebihan juga dikaitkan dengan peningkatan gejala kecemasan, depresi, serta penurunan citra diri. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi fungsi ganda media sosial baik sebagai ruang pendukung maupun faktor risiko terhadap kesehatan mental anak muda.
Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kajian literatur sistematis terhadap 20 artikel ilmiah yang diterbitkan pada rentang tahun 2019 hingga 2025. Artikel dikumpulkan dari Google Scholar, Scopus, dan jurnal nasional terakreditasi (SINTA), dengan fokus pada studi yang membahas media sosial, kesehatan mental, dan Generasi Z. Kriteria inklusi mencakup artikel yang relevan, telah melalui proses peer-review, dan tersedia dalam bahasa Indonesia atau Inggris.
Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan media sosial secara pasif dan berlebihan berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan gejala psikologis, namun penggunaan yang terarah dan kritis dapat mendukung peningkatan kesadaran kesehatan mental. Strategi yang efektif mencakup pendekatan naratif personal, dukungan sebaya, kolaborasi dengan micro-influencer, serta penyampaian konten edukatif dalam format visual dan interaktif.
Media sosial memiliki peran yang kompleks dalam lanskap kesehatan mental Generasi Z. Untuk mengoptimalkan dampak positifnya, diperlukan integrasi literasi digital dan strategi komunikasi berbasis empati dalam kebijakan publik serta

program pendidikan. Kolaborasi antara pendidik, pembuat konten, dan pembuat kebijakan sangat penting dalam menciptakan ekosistem digital yang sehat dan mendukung bagi generasi muda.

Keywords: Media Sosial, Kesehatan Mental, Generasi Z, Kesadaran Digital, Literasi Media

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INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the role of social media in shaping mental health awareness among Generation Z, using a literature review approach as the main method. Generation Z is a generation that is highly immersed in digital technology and social media, which they use not only as a means of communication and entertainment, but also as a space to seek information and psychological support. On one hand, social media enables the dissemination of positive messages regarding mental health. On the other hand, these platforms can also serve as sources of social and psychological pressure.

This phenomenon has attracted the attention of researchers from various disciplines, particularly communication, psychology, and the social sciences. However, these studies are often fragmented and lack a structured and systematic framework. Therefore, this article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how social media plays a role in Generation Z's mental health issues, including the positive and negative effects, as well as the digital communication strategies employed. Several key terms used in this article include: Generation Z (those born between 1997 and 2012), mental health (a state of emotional and psychological well-being), social media (interactive digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X/Twitter), and digital literacy (the ability to critically understand and utilize media). This review also includes concepts such as peer support, self-help content, and digital storytelling in the context of digital campaigns.

By analyzing 20 selected scholarly articles as the main literature sources, this paper presents a thorough analysis that includes thematic trends, communication approaches used, and the effectiveness of various content found on social media. It is hoped that this article not only provides academic insight but also practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and digital communication practitioners.

This article is divided into five main sections: introduction, literature review methodology, findings and discussion, conclusions and recommendations, and references. Each section is designed to provide a coherent narrative supported by relevant theories and data.

MATERAL AND METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine various scholarly articles related to the role of social media in shaping mental health awareness among

Generation Z. The main goal of this method is to identify patterns, communication strategies, and key findings that can inform the development of more effective digital communication efforts.

Relevant articles were retrieved from Google Scholar, Scopus, and accredited national journals (SINTA 1–3), focusing on the 2019–2025 publication range. Selection criteria included articles discussing Generation Z, social media, and mental health. A total of 20 articles were purposively selected based on their relevance and academic credibility.

The review process consisted of several stages: identification, preliminary selection, full reading, thematic coding, and synthesis. Data were analyzed thematically to explore key issues, dominant narratives, and communication approaches used in digital mental health content.

To ensure objectivity and quality, the article selection and analysis process was conducted systematically, with each step clearly documented. Thematic consistency and variation were assessed by comparing findings across different articles, enhancing content validity and research rigor.

Since this is a qualitative study, no quantitative statistical techniques were used. Instead, thematic analysis was applied to categorize the data into key areas such as positive impact, negative consequences, and effective communication strategies. These findings form the basis for the following results and discussion section

RESULTS

As digital natives, Generation Z has developed a unique relationship with social media platforms that significantly influences their mental health. The reviewed literature consistently emphasizes the dual nature of this interaction: while social media serves as a platform for self-expression, peer connection, and mental health education, it also presents substantial risks when overused or consumed passively. This section synthesizes key findings from recent studies, categorizing them into four primary themes: intensity of use and psychological impact, negative effects, positive contributions to mental health awareness, and effective digital communication strategies.

1. Social Media Usage Intensity and Its Impact

Social media has become an integral part of Generation Z's daily life. On average, this age group spends more than two to three hours per day on social media platforms, with some cases showing even higher usage. Mondal et al. (2024) highlight that increased duration of social media use strongly correlates with rising symptoms of anxiety, depression, and psychological stress. This phenomenon is linked to the consumption of perfectionist and idealistic content, which creates unrealistic social standards.

One of the most prominent psychological effects is the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). When users are constantly exposed to posts showcasing other people's "perfect" lives, they tend to feel left behind and inadequate. In addition, the pressure to always be online, respond to messages, and keep up with trends contributes to what is known as digital fatigue. Over time, this not only affects mental health but also disrupts sleep patterns, concentration, and real-life social relationships.

Several studies suggest a direct link between the intensity of digital interaction and a decline in mental well-being, especially when users lack proper filtering mechanisms or digital literacy. Therefore, it is essential to not only consider the amount of time spent on social media but also the quality of interactions. If social media is used actively for positive engagement or seeking support the effects may be more constructive compared to passive, consumptive usage.

2. Negative Effects

Social media's structural features facilitate intense social comparison. Metrics like likes, views, and followers drive users to evaluate themselves based on digital benchmarks. This leads to what is referred to as "performative anxiety," or the feeling of having to constantly present the best version of oneself. In the long term, this anxiety can erode self-esteem and result in the development of inauthentic identities, particularly among adolescents and young adults.

Moreover, social media algorithms tend to reinforce biases and expose users to repetitive content, a phenomenon known as the echo chamber. When a user frequently engages with pessimistic or negative content, the platform automatically displays similar posts, reinforcing negative emotions. In terms of mental health, this may exacerbate symptoms of depression or anxiety, especially if not balanced by reflective or positive content. Cyberbullying and hate speech also contribute to users' psychological vulnerability.

The condition is worsened by passive usage patterns such as doomscrolling—mindlessly scrolling through social media without any specific intention, often before sleep. This activity has been shown to reduce life satisfaction, increase feelings of loneliness, and heighten the risk of dysphoria. Thus, the negative effects of social media stem not only from the content itself but also from consumption patterns and the interaction mechanisms embedded within the digital ecosystem.

3. The Positive Role of Social Media in Mental Health Awareness

Despite the risks, social media also holds significant potential in raising mental health awareness among Gen Z. Numerous accounts and digital communities are now dedicated to mental health education in approachable and easily digestible formats. For instance, accounts like @satupersenofficial and @sehatmental.id provide content with relatable language, appealing visuals,

and empathetic messages. This demonstrates that, if managed properly, social media can serve as a safe space to learn and share experiences about mental health.

Educational content that takes the form of personal narratives, light infographics, interactive videos, and user-generated content has proven more effective in engaging Gen Z. They are more emotionally connected to real-life stories than to formal, authoritative messages. This strategy also fosters a sense of belonging and solidarity among users, creating a peer support community that reinforces a collective spirit of healing and emotional growth.

Furthermore, digital platforms help reach individuals who may be reluctant to seek face-to-face support. Through social media, they can begin to develop self-awareness and understanding of their mental conditions independently. This is particularly important in countries like Indonesia, where mental health issues still carry considerable stigma. Hence, the role of social media extends beyond communication it serves as a medium for cultural transformation and public perception change regarding psychological issues.

4. Effective Communication Strategies

The effectiveness of mental health communication on social media greatly depends on the narrative and visual approaches used. Gen Z tends to respond better to content that is authentic, empathetic, and interactive. Storytelling where individuals share personal experiences about anxiety, trauma, or recovery has been shown to be effective in building emotional connections and inspiring audiences. This communication model creates a parasocial interaction effect, making the audience feel connected and less alone.

In addition to storytelling, strategies such as the use of concise and clear infographics and collaborative campaigns with young public figures or influencers are widely used. These collaborations help deliver messages to broader audiences and strengthen content credibility. In some cases, involvement from influencers with professional backgrounds (e.g., young psychologists or mental health activists) adds value in terms of accuracy and audience trust.

Equally important, successful communication strategies tend to avoid patronizing or judgmental tones. Messages delivered in a conversational, inclusive, and supportive style are generally better received. Gen Z often resists formal authority and prefers horizontal dialogue. Therefore, an empathy-based approach, using everyday language and contemporary visuals, is key to raising awareness and encouraging behavioral change related to mental health through social media.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social media plays an ambivalent role in the mental well-being of Generation Z. On one hand, it offers an open space for education, self-expression, and peer support. On the other hand, excessive exposure without digital literacy guidance can worsen the psychological condition of adolescents and

young adults. Therefore, a strategic approach is needed to enhance its positive benefits while minimizing its negative impacts.

In the context of education, integrating digital literacy and mental health topics into the curriculum is a crucial step. Learning that is adaptive to contemporary changes will equip students with the ability to use social media wisely and healthily. Furthermore, cross-sector collaboration is highly essential.

Governments and policymakers need to establish active partnerships with local content creators who understand Gen Z culture. Digital campaigns that are participatory, light, and closely related to youth lifestyles have proven to be more effective in reaching the target audience. Empathy-based communication interventions will enhance message acceptance and generate long-term impact.

In addition, research institutions and academics are encouraged to continuously evaluate the evolving dynamics of social media usage. Longitudinal studies can uncover long-term patterns and identify mitigation strategies that are relevant in both local and global contexts. These data are essential to strengthen evidence-based policy foundations.

With a structured, collaborative, and adaptive approach, social media can be transformed into a safer and more empowering space for the mental health of Generation Z. Through education, creative campaigns, and policies that prioritize digital well-being, a positive transformation in the mental health landscape is indeed achievable.

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