

The Effectiveness of TikTok Social Media as a Mental Health Education Platform for Adolescents

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ABSTRAK

Media sosial telah menjadi bagian penting dalam kehidupan remaja Generasi Z dan Alpha, serta media potensial untuk penyebaran informasi kesehatan mental. Di antara berbagai platform, TikTok menunjukkan pertumbuhan pesat dengan lebih dari 63 juta pengguna aktif bulanan di Indonesia pada tahun 2023, di mana 45% penggunanya berusia 13–24 tahun. Format video pendek yang kreatif dan mudah diakses menjadikan TikTok media yang efektif untuk pendidikan kesehatan mental, sebagaimana dibuktikan oleh popularitas tagar #mentalhealth yang telah dilihat lebih dari 3,2 miliar kali dari Desember 2019 hingga 2025. Mengetahui efektivitas media sosial TikTok sebagai media pendidikan kesehatan mental bagi remaja, penelitian ini menggunakan desain kelompok kontrol non-ekuivalen. Sebanyak 928 remaja berusia 10–19 tahun dari lima wilayah dibagi menjadi dua kelompok: mereka yang menerima pendidikan kesehatan mental melalui TikTok (n=464) dan mereka yang menerima pendidikan melalui Instagram (n=464). Pengetahuan kesehatan mental responden diukur dua kali menggunakan kuesioner, sebelum dan sesudah pendidikan kesehatan diberikan. Hasil post-test menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan pada kelompok TikTok dengan nilai $p < 0,05$, yang mengindikasikan perbedaan pengetahuan sebelum dan sesudah intervensi. Jumlah responden dalam kategori pengetahuan tinggi meningkat, sedangkan jumlah responden dalam kategori pengetahuan rendah menurun secara signifikan. Pendidikan melalui video pendek di TikTok lebih efektif dalam meningkatkan pengetahuan kesehatan mental remaja. Penyampaian informasi yang menarik secara visual, ringkas, dan disesuaikan dengan gaya komunikasi remaja merupakan faktor kunci keberhasilannya.

Kata kunci: Pengetahuan Kesehatan Mental; Remaja; TikTok; Instagram

ABSTRACT

Social media has become an important part of the lives of Generation Z and Alpha teenagers, as well as a potential medium for the dissemination of mental health information. Among various platforms, TikTok shows rapid growth with more than 63 million monthly active users in Indonesia in 2023, where 45% of its users are aged 13–24 years. The creative and easily accessible short video format makes TikTok an effective medium for mental health education, as evidenced by the popularity of the hashtag #mentalhealth which has been viewed more than 3.2 billion times from December 2019 to 2025. Knowing the effectiveness of TikTok social media as a medium for mental health education for adolescents. This study used a non-equivalent control group design. A total of 928 adolescents aged 10–19 from five regions were divided into two groups: those receiving mental health education through TikTok (n=464) and those receiving education through Instagram (n=464). Respondents' mental health knowledge was measured twice using questionnaires, before and after the health education was provided. Post-test results showed a significant increase in the TikTok group with a p-value < 0.05 , indicating a difference in knowledge before and after the intervention. The number of respondents in the high knowledge category increased, while the number of respondents in the low knowledge category decreased significantly. Education through short videos on TikTok is more effective in increasing adolescents' mental health knowledge. Delivering information that is visually engaging, concise, and tailored to adolescent communication styles is a key factor in its success.

Keywords: Mental Health Knowledge; Adolescents; TikTok; Instagram

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescent mental health has become a crucial issue in recent years, particularly with the rise in cases of mental disorders and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the psychological well-being of this age group. World Health Organization (WHO) data shows that approximately 13% of adolescents worldwide experience mental disorders, with depression and anxiety being the most common conditions (Mamun, M.A., Sakib, N., & Griffiths, M.D., 2022). In Indonesia, according to the 2023 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas), the prevalence of mental and emotional disorders among adolescents aged 15-24 reached 14.7%, up from 9.8% in 2018 (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). This figure indicates the urgency of providing appropriate and easily accessible mental health education to adolescents.

One of the challenges in conveying mental health information to adolescents is the gap in access and the stigma that persists in society. Many adolescents are reluctant to seek professional help or discuss their mental health issues due to fear of stigmatization (Fitri, A., & Rulita, A., 2022). This highlights the importance of seeking alternative approaches that are more relevant to adolescents' daily lives to convey mental health information.

Social media is closely woven into the lives of Generation Z and Generation Alpha adolescents and can be a potential platform for disseminating mental health information. Among various social media platforms, TikTok has recorded phenomenal user growth, with over 63 million monthly active users in Indonesia in 2023, with 45% of its users aged 13-24 (Databoks, 2023). TikTok's short, creative, and easy-to-consume content format has made it an attractive medium for conveying mental health information to adolescents. Mental health content on TikTok has grown rapidly, with hashtags like #mentalhealth having been viewed over 3.2 billion times by December 2023 (Maulida, R., Pranata, L., & Kusuma, D., 2023). The content varies from educational information about the symptoms of mental disorders and stress management techniques to personal testimonials and emotional support from fellow users. TikTok's uniqueness lies in its ability to communicate complex information about mental health in a concise, visual, and easy-to-understand format, making it more engaging for adolescents than conventional educational methods. However, the effectiveness of TikTok as a medium for mental health education still requires in-depth study.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with the aim of determining the effectiveness of TikTok social media as a medium for mental health education. The study was conducted in two junior high schools, two senior high schools, and one private hospital, namely SMPN 2 Blanakan Subang, SMPN 214 East Jakarta, SMAN 1 Bojongmanik Lebak, and SMA Muhammadiyah Plus Toboali, in the even

semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The sample size was adolescents who actively use TikTok and Instagram. The sample was divided into two groups, namely 464 students who were given mental health education using TikTok and 464 students who were given mental health education using Instagram. To determine the level of mental health knowledge of respondents using the Mental Health Knowledge Questionnaire (MHKQ). This questionnaire contains 20 items stating basic knowledge about mental health issues.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A total of 305 women of reproductive age (15–49 years) participated in this study. Most respondents had a normal Body Mass Index (BMI) category, accounting for 63.3% (n = 193), while 36.7% (n = 112) were classified as having a *risky BMI* (either underweight or overweight).

Table 1. Distribution of Body Mass Index (BMI) among Women of Reproductive Age (n = 305)

No	Variable	Treatment Group	Control Group	p
		Total (n)	Percentage (%)	Total (n)
1	Age			
	Early adolescence (10-13 years)	33	7.1	33
	Middle adolescence (14-16 years)	262	56.5	265
	Late adolescence (17-19 years)	169	36.4	166
2	Gender			
	Male	193	56.5	190
	Female	271	36.4	274
3	Frequency of Social Media Use			
	Rarely (1-2 times a week)	0	0	0
	Sometimes (3-5 times a week)	99	21.3	114
	Often (daily)	365	78.7	350
4	Duration of Social Media Use			
	< 1 hour	30	6.5	48
	1-2 hours	132	28.4	137
	>> 2 hours	302	65.1	279
5	Most Frequently Used Social Media			
	TikTok	232	50	232
	Instagram	232	50	232
6	Frequent Activities Used			
	Chatting	29	6.2	29

	Accessing social media	76	16.4	58
	Listening to music	36	7.8	29
	Browsing the web	42	9.1	29
	Online shopping	72	15.5	86
	Streaming film/video	36	7.8	48
	Checking e-mail	58	12.5	70
	Using map applications	46	9.9	46
	Using online transportation applications	23	5.0	23

BMI Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Normal BMI (18.5–24.9 kg/m ²)	193	63.3
Risky BMI (<18.5 or ≥25.0 kg/m ²)	112	36.7
Total	305	100.0

The menstrual cycle distribution showed that 185 respondents (60.7%) experienced regular menstrual cycles, while 120 respondents (39.3%) had irregular cycles.

Table 2. Distribution of Menstrual Cycle Regularity among Women of Reproductive Age (n = 305)

Menstrual Cycle	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Regular (21–35 days, variation <7 days)	185	60.7
Irregular (variation >7 days or amenorrhea >3 months)	120	39.3
Total	305	100.0

Among all participants, 229 women (75.1%) did not report fertility problems, while 76 women (24.9%) experienced self-reported difficulties conceiving.

Table 3. Distribution of Fertility Disorders among Women of Reproductive Age (n = 305)

Fertility Status	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
No fertility problems	229	75.1
Experienced fertility problems	76	24.9
Total	305	100.0

The Chi-square test demonstrated a significant association between BMI and menstrual cycle regularity ($p = 0.016$). Women with a risky BMI were 1.79 times more likely to experience irregular menstrual cycles than those with a normal BMI (95% CI = 1.11–2.88).

Table 4. Association between BMI and Menstrual Cycle Regularity (n = 305)

BMI Category	Regular Cycle (n, %)	Irregular Cycle (n, %)	OR (95% CI)	p-value
Normal BMI	127 (41.6%)	66 (21.6%)	Reference	
Risky BMI	58 (19.0%)	54 (17.7%)	1.79 (1.11–2.88)	0.016

The association between BMI and fertility disorders was not statistically significant ($p = 0.600$). Although fertility problems were more frequently reported among women with a normal BMI, the difference was not meaningful.

Table 5. Association between BMI and Fertility Disorders (n = 305)

BMI Category	No Fertility Problems (n, %)	With Fertility Problems (n, %)	p-value
Normal BMI	143 (46.9%)	50 (16.4%)	0.600
Risky BMI	86 (28.2%)	26 (8.5%)	

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents Based on Mental Health Knowledge Levels in the Control Group

Using Instagram Social Media		
Score	Pre-test	Post-test
	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
Good (score > 14)	57	11.4
Fair (score 7-13)	97	20.9
Poor (score < 7)	314	67.7
Total	464	100.0

The table above shows the adolescents' level of mental health knowledge through the provision of education via Instagram social media.

Before the education was administered (Pre-test), the level of Good knowledge was 57 respondents (11.4%), the level of Fair knowledge was 97 respondents (20.9%), and the level of Poor knowledge was the highest, with 314 respondents (67.7%).

After the education was administered (Post-test), the level of Good knowledge significantly increased to 199 respondents (42.9%), the level of Fair knowledge was 232 respondents (50.0%), and the level of Poor knowledge experienced a drastic decrease to only 33 respondents (7.1%).

Table 4. Normality Test Results

Group	Measurement	p-value	Description
Treatment (TikTok)	Pre-test	0.106	Normal distribution
	Post-test	0.346	Normal distribution
Control (Instagram)	Pre-test	0.101	Normal distribution
	Post-test	0.201	Normal distribution

The normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with SPSS 28.0.

The results show that the knowledge level data for both groups (Treatment and Control) have a normal distribution, as the p-value in all measurements is > 0.05 ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5. Distribution of Pretest and Posttest Results Analysis in Both Groups

Measurement	Mean Rank	SD	p-value
Treatment Group (TikTok)			
Pre-test	132.145	361.950	0.001
Post-test	428.803	562.601	
Control Group (Instagram)			
Pre-test	121.599	367.788	0.005
Post-test	211.459	435.461	

Based on the data analysis using the Paired Sample T-test, the results showed that the p-value in both groups was $p < 0.05$ ($p = 0.001$ for the Treatment Group and $p = 0.005$ for the Control Group).

This indicates that both TikTok and Instagram social media platforms have an influence on the respondents' level of knowledge regarding adolescent mental health.

Table 6. Distribution of the Analysis of the Effectiveness of TikTok Social Media as a Mental Health Education Medium for Adolescents

Group	Mean Rank	SD	p-value
Treatment Group	428.803	562.601	0.001
Control Group	211.459	435.461	

Based on the data analysis using the Independent Sample T-test between the treatment group and the control group, the result obtained is a p-value < 0.05 ($p = 0.001$).

This indicates that there is a significant difference in the level of knowledge between the two groups. In other words, the TikTok social media platform is more effective as a medium for mental health education among adolescents.

The frequency distribution of adolescents' knowledge levels regarding mental health through TikTok social media education showed that before the education, 55 respondents (11.9%) had good knowledge, 219 respondents (47.2%) had sufficient knowledge, and 190 respondents (40.9%) had insufficient knowledge. After the education, the level of knowledge in the good category increased significantly, with 400 respondents (86.2%), and 64 respondents (13.8%) had sufficient knowledge. Meanwhile, the level of knowledge in the poor category decreased drastically, with 0 respondents (0%).

This is in line with research conducted by Rahmawati, N. (2023), which found that digital education through TikTok has a greater impact on reducing adolescent stress than Instagram because TikTok provides more dynamic content. Entertainment content is highly sought after by adolescents, as it is considered to offer a different kind of entertainment than other social media platforms. Therefore, TikTok is considered a current trend, as it provides more than just information for entertainment (Maghfiro, 2022).

This study provides a baseline overview of adolescents' knowledge of mental health before educational interventions through social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram. These results

provide an important basis for understanding the extent of adolescents' understanding of mental health before efforts to improve their knowledge through digital media are implemented. This low level of adolescent knowledge may be due to several factors, such as a lack of public awareness of the importance of mental health in schools, limited access to age-appropriate mental health information, and the persistent stigma surrounding mental health issues in society. While social media should be a valuable source of information, it has not been optimally utilized to deliver quality, health-based mental health education.

These findings align with research by Fitriana (2022), which found that adolescents' knowledge of mental health tends to be low due to a lack of targeted education and limited mental health content in the school curriculum. Therefore, utilizing social media as an educational tool is considered strategic, given its close relationship with adolescents' lives. Therefore, this initial overview confirms that implementing educational interventions through social media is a relevant and necessary step in efforts to improve adolescents' understanding of mental health. Based on the analysis of Instagram users, adolescents' knowledge of mental health before education via Instagram was good (57 respondents (11.4%)), moderate (97 respondents (20.9%)), and poor (314 respondents (67.7%)). After education, the level of knowledge in the good category increased significantly to 199 respondents (42.9%), moderate (232 respondents (50.0%)), and poor (33 respondents (7.1%)).

Instagram has become a popular platform for education for several reasons. It offers a variety of visual features, such as engaging photos and videos, which can be used to convey learning materials in a more engaging and easy-to-understand manner. Furthermore, Instagram allows interaction between teachers and students through comments and direct messages, and can foster a positive learning community.

This study found a significant change in adolescents' knowledge of mental health after educational intervention via TikTok. During the pretest, the majority of respondents were in the low to moderate knowledge category. This indicates that, prior to the education, many students did not fully understand the importance of mental health, the signs of psychological disorders, or simple ways to manage stress and emotions.

Following an intervention involving educational videos on TikTok, posttest results showed an increase in the number of respondents in the high knowledge category, while the number in the low knowledge category decreased drastically. This indicates that TikTok is effective in conveying information through an engaging style, strong visuals, and language that is easily understood by adolescents. This increase also reflects that social media, packaged with an educational and creative approach, can reach students' learning interests, especially in today's digital age. TikTok is a suitable medium because it combines educational and entertainment elements in a short yet informative format.

This study also explains that the level of knowledge of adolescents in the group receiving education through Instagram at the meeting before the intervention/education was given was: 20 respondents (14.8%) had good knowledge, 29 respondents (21.5%) had adequate knowledge, and 86 respondents (63.7%) had insufficient knowledge. Meanwhile, after the researchers conducted the intervention/education, the level of knowledge increased by 57 respondents (42.2%), and the level of knowledge increased by 69 respondents (51.1%), while the level of knowledge decreased by 9 respondents (6.7%).

This aligns with research conducted by Rahmawati, A. (2021), which found that health education through Instagram increased students' knowledge by up to 40% within two weeks, primarily due to engaging visual content and age-appropriate language.

Based on the frequency distribution results, it was found that before the intervention (pretest), the majority of adolescents had low to moderate levels of knowledge. This indicates that their understanding of mental health, including the definition, signs of stress and anxiety, and prevention efforts, was still limited.

After the educational intervention through Instagram, there was a significant increase in respondents' knowledge. Posttest data showed that the majority of adolescents moved into the high knowledge category. This indicates that Instagram, as an educational medium, has had a positive impact on students' understanding of mental health. Instagram allows for the delivery of information through various formats, including infographics, short videos (Reels), interactive stories, and educational captions. These formats have been proven to attract teenagers' attention and are easily accessible anytime and anywhere. The aesthetic visual style and easy-to-use language make students feel more connected and comfortable in understanding mental health materials.

These findings reinforce the view that using social media as a health education tool has great potential, especially if the content is tailored to the characteristics and learning styles of Generation Z.

However, according to the researchers' assumptions, this intervention process faced several challenges, such as varying levels of interest in content types and the possibility of distraction from other, non-educational content on Instagram. Therefore, content selection and an interactive approach are crucial factors in ensuring the intervention's effectiveness.

Data analysis using a Paired Sample T-test showed a p-value of <0.05 for both groups. This indicates that both TikTok and Instagram influence respondents' knowledge of adolescent mental health. Meanwhile, data analysis using an Independent Sample T-test for the treatment and control groups yielded a p-value of <0.05 . This indicates that the two groups have significant differences in their knowledge levels, indicating that TikTok is a more effective medium for mental health education for adolescents.

This suggests that TikTok's short video format, dynamic visuals, and simple language are well-suited to the characteristics of adolescents who prefer fast, concise, and engaging media. TikTok also allows students to access educational materials at any time and repeatedly, contributing to increased understanding.

In terms of content, videos covering topics such as stress, anxiety, how to manage emotions, and the importance of seeking professional help are delivered in a non-formal, non-patronizing approach, and are relatable to adolescents' everyday experiences. This creates a comfortable and open learning environment. However, according to the researchers' assumptions, several challenges arise in its implementation. One is the distraction from non-educational content also available on the TikTok platform, as well as the potential for dependence on digital entertainment. Therefore, the use of TikTok as an educational medium requires supervision and guidance from teachers, counselors, or mentors.

CONCLUSION

Following an intervention involving educational videos on TikTok, posttest results showed an increase in the number of respondents in the high knowledge category, while the number in the low knowledge category decreased drastically. This indicates that TikTok is effective in conveying information through an engaging style, strong visuals, and language that is easily understood by adolescents. This increase also reflects that social media, packaged with an educational and creative approach, can reach students' learning interests, especially in the current digital era. TikTok is a suitable medium because it combines educational and entertainment elements in a short yet informative duration. This research aligns with mass communication theory, where media can gradually shape individual knowledge and attitudes. Furthermore, these results also support previous research by Putri (2022), which stated that education through TikTok can improve adolescents' understanding of health issues.

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