

SOCIAL ANXIETY LEVEL AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONG STUDENT FOLLOWERS OF @collegemfs on SOCIAL MEDIA X

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Abstract

The rapid growth of digital technology has led to widespread social media use, with approximately 60.4% of Indonesia's population being active users. Excessive social media use can negatively affect students' psychological well-being and academic performance. This study aimed to determine the relationship between the level of social anxiety and the intensity of social media use among student followers of the @collegemfs account on social media X. This research employed a quantitative correlational design with a cross-sectional approach involving 399 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The instruments used were the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS) and the Social Media Use Intensity Scale (SIPMS). The results showed that most respondents had a low level of social anxiety (24.6%) and moderate intensity of social media use (94.5%). The Spearman Rank test obtained a p-value of 0.745 ($p > 0.05$), indicating no significant relationship between social anxiety level and social media use. It can be concluded that students with different levels of social anxiety do not show significant differences in social media usage intensity.

Keywords:

Social anxiety; students; social media; intensity of use

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a fundamental aspect of modern communication and student life. Social media platforms have rapidly become central arenas for social interaction, identity presentation, and peer comparison – especially for university students and young adults. According to Data Reportal 2024, 60.4% of Indonesians actively use social media for an average of over three hours per day [1]. While it offers educational, informational and social benefits, prolonged use has been associated with negative psychological outcomes, including social anxiety, depression and social comparison tendencies [2]. Recent literature indicates a complex and non-uniform relationship between social media use and social anxiety. Several lines of evidence suggest that the way people use social media and whether use is problematic/ addictive matter more than mere time spent online. Social anxiety refers to the fear of being negatively evaluated by others, leading to avoidance of social interactions. Previous studies suggest that individuals with higher levels of social anxiety may prefer online interaction, perceiving it as safer and easier to control [3]. Students often use social media not only for entertainment but also for seeking information, emotional support and academic collaboration [4]. However, excessive or maladaptive use can reduce real-life social engagement. This study explores whether the level of social anxiety is associated with social media use intensity among student followers of @collegemfs, an educational discussion account on social media X.

microblogging platforms such as Social Media X emphasize brief public posts, high visibility and immediate feedback—conditions that can heighten sensitivity to social evaluation and reinforce anxious anticipatory processes. Understanding this relationship is essential for developing mental health awareness programs for students in digital environments.

2. METHOD

This research applied a quantitative correlational design with a **cross-sectional approach**. The study population consisted of 100.097 followers of the @collegemfs account on social media X as of December 2024. Using purposive sampling, 399 respondents were selected who met inclusion criteria: being active students and followers of the account, willing to participate voluntarily by completing the online questionnaire, have accessed or interacted with the @collegemfs account in the last 6 months. Two standardized instruments were used: (a) **the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale** to measure levels of social anxiety. The total score classifies respondents into categories: mild, moderate, fairly severe, severe and very severe; (b) **The Social Media Use Intensity Scale** to assess the duration, frequency, and emotional engagement in social media use; higher scores indicate greater engagement or dependency on social media platforms

Data were collected online in February-March 2025 using Google Forms shared via direct message and post links on Social Media X. Respondents who met the inclusion criteria were directed to an online Google form containing the informed consent page and questionnaire. Data were analysed using the Spearman Rank correlation test with a 95% confidence interval ($\alpha=0.05$).

Ethical clearance for this research was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto with approval number: KEPK/UMP/230/II/2025.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most respondents were female (87%), aged between 18-21 years (51,4%), the majority were in their 8th semester (68.4%). A total of 40.4% used three social media platforms simultaneously and 37.8% reported using social media for more than five hours daily.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	52	13.0
Female	347	87.0
Age		
18–21 years	205	51.4
22–25 years	189	47.4
>25 years	5	1.3
Semester		
1	5	1.3
2	15	3.8
3	2	0.5
4	30	7.5
5	3	0.8
6	35	8.8

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
7	7	1.8
8	273	68.4
>8	29	7.3
Number of Social Media Platforms Used		
1	49	12.3
2	62	15.5
3	161	40.4
4	105	26.3
5	22	5.5
Duration of Social Media Use per Day		
1-2 hours	5	1.3
2-3 hours	60	15.0
3-4 hours	99	24.8
4-5 hours	84	21.1
>5 hours	151	37.8
Total	399	100.0

Most respondents showed mild social anxiety levels (24.6%), while 22.6% experienced very severe anxiety.

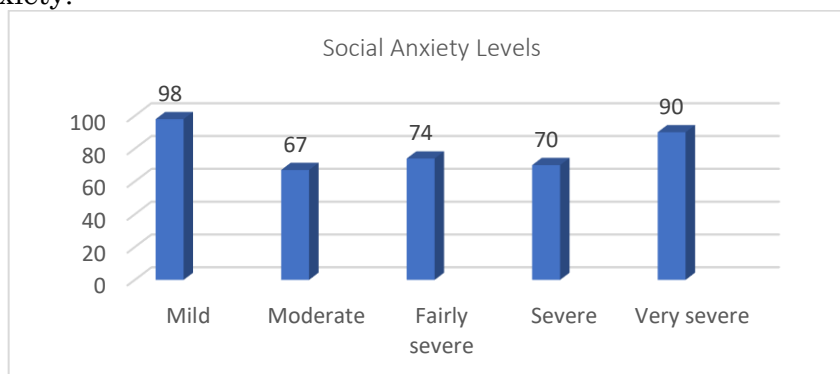


Figure 1. Social Anxiety Levels Distribution

The majority 377 respondents demonstrated moderate social media use intensity (94.5%), with 37.8% spending more than 5 hours daily in social media. Mild social anxiety reflect discomfort in specific social settings without significantly impairing functioning (5). Student with mild anxiety still engage socially but remain cautious of evaluation and judgment.

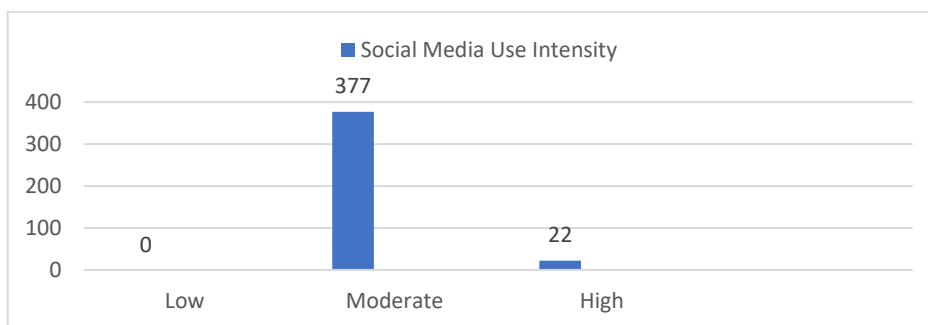


Figure 2. Social Media Use Intensity

The results of this study revealed that most respondents experienced mild levels of social anxiety and moderate intensity of social media use. The Spearman rank correlation test revealed no significant relationship between social anxiety level and social media use ($p=0.745$, $r= -0.016$). this indicate that, in this population, the tendency to use social media is not directly influenced by social anxiety.

Table 4. Correlation Between Social Anxiety and Social media Use (n=399)

Variables	r	p-value
Social Anxiety vs Social Media Use	-0.016	0,745

This finding differs from previous studies that found positive associations between these variables. Student with higher levels of social anxiety tend to engage in more frequent social media interactions as a way to avoid direct interpersonal communication [5]. Social anxiety contributes to problematic internet use among adolescent due to fear of judgement and rejection in real-life situations [6,7]. However, in this study, the absence of a significant relationship may be explained by several contextual and methodological factors. Data collection was conducted online, which may have reduced respondents' feelings of social pressure. Socially anxious individuals reported significantly higher social anxiety levels in offline compared to online interactions [8]. The social anxiety decreased more in online interaction among subjects with high social anxiety, depression, behavioural inhibition system and behavioural activation system [9]. This setting allows participant with social anxiety to respond comfortably, thereby minimizing the influence of anxiety on self-reported behaviour. Online surveys provide psychological distance and a sense of anonymity, which can normalize digital interactions and reduce measurable anxiety. The current generation of students--particularly those in their final semesters of university—have adopted to post-pandemic digital learning environments. During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, online communication became the dominant medium for education and socialization. As a result, digital interaction is now perceived as a normative and comfortable social setting, not as an anxiety-provoking situation. Consequently, the correlation between social anxiety and online engagement may be weaker than in pre pandemic contexts.

Motivation for social media use among students has diversified. Generation Z tends to use social media not only for self-expression but also for educational, professional networking, and emotional support purposes [10,11] . In this study, respondent were followers of a student-oriented account, which frequently shares academic content, peer discussions and motivational posts. Therefore, students may use social media primarily for productive and community-oriented goals, rather than as an avoidance strategy linked to anxiety. The moderate intensity of social media use found among most respondents reflects a balanced engagement pattern. Moderate users often demonstrate positive digital behaviours, such as seeking information, maintaining relationships, and expressing emotions constructively. This may suggest that the respondents have achieved a functional equilibrium in their online activities, avoiding both underuse (social isolation) and overuse (addiction). Problematic or addictive social media use predicted lower life satisfaction and greater psychological distress [12].

This finding contrast with several previous studies reporting that higher online engagement, particularly problematic use, is linked to increased social anxiety and psychological distress. Excessive engagement on social media platforms heightens anxiety

levels and emotional vulnerability rather than serving as a coping for stress, as an avoidance strategy which paradoxically maintains anxiety and lowers overall well-being [6][3]. The relationship between social media use and social anxiety depends on the type of engagement—whether the individual uses it actively (e.g., posting, commenting, communicating) or passively (e.g., scrolling without interaction), active social media use negatively correlated with social anxiety, otherwise passive social media use positively correlated with social anxiety [13]. The majority of respondents in this study demonstrated moderate, balanced use of social media – likely combining both active and passive behaviours—which may have mitigated potential anxiety effects. Twitter/ X has mixed effects: some negative (especially for well-being) and some positive (like sense of belonging), anxiety was not reliably affected in momentary measures [14].

Another possible explanation is the post-pandemic adaptation to digital interaction. The COVID-19 pandemic transformed online communication into a normalized mode of academic and social engagement. As students became accustomed to digital learning environments, interacting on platforms such as X may no longer trigger the anxiety typically associated with face-to-face evaluation [10]. This adaptation may explain why the association between social anxiety and online activity appears weaker among contemporary student populations compared with pre-pandemic samples.

This finding can also be interpreted through the social compensation and stimulation hypothesis. The social compensation model suggests that individuals with high social anxiety use online communication to compensate for difficulties in offline interactions. Conversely, the social stimulation model posits that social media can enhance social connectedness regardless of anxiety level [6][14].

Overall, these findings emphasize that the psychological impact of social media depends on individual motives, patterns of engagement and social context of online communities. Balanced and purposeful use – particularly in supportive academic spaces – can mitigate anxiety risk and foster positive digital experiences among students.

4. CONCLUSION

There was no significant relationship between social anxiety level and social media use among student followers of @collegemfs on Social Media X. Although the correlation was weak and negative, this suggests that social media engagement among students may be driven more by academic and social factors than anxiety. Future research should integrate offline data collection and include mediating variables such as coping strategies or self-esteem.

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