

# The Influence of Social Media on Communication Patterns and Socio-Political Dynamics of Students

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keyword:</p> <p>Social media; Communication patterns; Youth communication; Social dynamics; Political dynamics</p>	<p>The rapid development of social media has significantly transformed communication patterns among adolescents, particularly first-year university students. These students experience a critical phase of social and academic transition that encourages intensive use of social media for communication and social adaptation. This study aims to analyze the influence of social media on the communication patterns of first-semester students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya. A quantitative survey method was employed, involving 150 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed with descriptive statistics and simple linear regression. The findings indicate that social media has a significant effect on students' communication patterns. High intensity of use fosters the development of digitally oriented communication and increases comfort in online interactions, while concurrently reducing face-to-face communication. Social media plays a crucial role in students' social adaptation and also influences their socio-political dynamics by enhancing digital engagement and civic awareness. However, reliance on digital communication presents challenges for the development of interpersonal communication skills. In conclusion, social media exerts a multidimensional influence on both communication patterns and socio-political dynamics among first-year students. Higher education institutions are therefore encouraged to integrate digital literacy and interpersonal communication development into curricula and student activities to promote balanced socio-political participation and effective communication skills in the digital era.</p>

## INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes in the way individuals interact and communicate. One tangible manifestation of this development is the emergence of social media, which has become an inseparable part of daily life, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Social media functions not only as a platform for entertainment and information exchange, but also as a medium that shapes new communication patterns distinct from conventional face-to-face communication (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011). These transformations have generated complex social dynamics, particularly in the context of interpersonal and group communication.

Adolescents and university students represent the age group that most intensively utilizes social media. Various platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, and X (formerly

Twitter) have become primary channels for building social relationships, expressing identity, and interacting with the surrounding environment. Previous studies indicate that the intensity of social media use correlates with changes in communication practices, including frequency, language style, and depth of interaction (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Communication that was previously dominated by direct face-to-face encounters has increasingly shifted toward text-based, visual, and audiovisual interactions mediated through digital platforms.

Within the context of higher education, first-semester students experience a critical transition from secondary education to university life. This phase is characterized by complex processes of social, academic, and psychological adaptation. New students are required to establish new social networks, adjust to academic culture, and develop more mature and critical communication skills. At the same time, the intensity of social media use tends to increase, as these platforms serve as primary tools for initiating and maintaining early social connections within the university environment (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009).

The Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP), as an academic environment that emphasizes communication skills, social analysis, and public interaction, provides a relevant context for examining this phenomenon. FISIP students are expected to possess strong interpersonal and public communication skills as essential academic and professional competencies. However, in practice, many students feel more comfortable communicating through social media than through direct face-to-face interactions. This phenomenon raises important questions regarding how social media influences students' communication patterns, particularly first-semester students who are still in the early stages of developing their academic and social identities.

Previous studies have shown that social media can have positive effects on communication, such as expanding social networks, enhancing connectedness, and facilitating information exchange (Baharuddin et al., 2021, 2022; Jubba et al., 2020; Widayat et al., 2022). However, other research has also identified negative impacts, including reduced quality of face-to-face communication, an increase in superficial interactions, and a decline in empathy during direct interactions (Turkle, 2015; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017). These varied findings suggest that the influence of social media on communication patterns is not uniform but contextual, shaped by user characteristics (Baharuddin, Sairin, Nurmandi, et al., 2022; Baharuddin, Sairin, Qodir, et al., 2022; Luth, Kismartini, et al., 2023; Luth, Maswati, et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, studies on social media and adolescent communication have been widely conducted, both in SINTA- and Scopus-indexed journals. Several studies have found that social media significantly influences adolescents' communication styles, language use, and social relationships (Putri & Nurhajati, 2020; Sari & Nugroho, 2021). However, most of these studies still focus on high school students or adolescents in general and tend to treat social media as a single variable without linking it specifically to the context of higher education institutions and particular academic disciplines.

Moreover, research specifically examining first-semester university students as the subject remains limited. This group has characteristics distinct from upper-level students, in terms of communication maturity, social experience, and intensity of adaptation to a new environment. First-year students tend to rely more heavily on social media as a tool for building social relationships due to the limited and still superficial face-to-face interactions. This makes first-semester students a strategic group to study in the context of communication pattern changes caused by social media.

The local context also represents an important aspect often overlooked in previous research. Universitas Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya (UMPR), as a university in Central Kalimantan, has social and cultural characteristics that differ from universities in major cities on Java Island. The diverse social backgrounds of students, including those from remote and outside regions, influence how they utilize social media and engage in communication. Therefore, research focusing on first-semester students at FISIP UMPR is relevant for providing a more contextual and representative empirical understanding.

Theoretically, this study is grounded in a communication perspective that views media as a means for fulfilling individual needs, as explained in the Uses and Gratifications theory. This theory posits that individuals actively select media to satisfy specific needs, such as social interaction, information, and identity formation (Blumler & Katz, 1974). In the context of university students, social media is used not only for entertainment but also to build social relationships and negotiate one's identity as a new student. However, intensive media use can also shape communication patterns that differ from direct face-to-face interaction.

Based on this background, several research gaps can be identified. First, there is limited research specifically examining the influence of social media on the communication patterns of first-semester students in FISIP. Second, studies in the local context of higher education institutions outside Java, particularly in Central Kalimantan, remain relatively scarce in the communication literature. Third, previous studies have largely focused on describing social media use rather than analyzing in depth the relationship between the intensity of social media use and changes in students' interpersonal communication patterns.

In response to these gaps, this study aims to analyze the influence of social media on the communication patterns and socio-political dynamics of first-semester students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the relationship between the intensity of social media use and changes in students' interpersonal communication patterns, both in digital and face-to-face contexts, and to identify its implications for social adaptation and the development of socio-political awareness within the campus environment. Accordingly, this research is expected to provide both empirical and theoretical contributions to the study of communication and socio-political dynamics in the context of higher education in Central Kalimantan.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Social Media from a Communication Science Perspective***

Social media is part of new media that enables two-way interaction, active user participation, and the simultaneous production and distribution of content. It is defined as a web-based service that allows individuals to create a public or semi-public profile, manage a list of connections, and view or explore other users' social networks. This definition highlights that social media functions not only as a communication tool but also as a social space that shapes users' relationships and identities (Ahdan et al., 2024; Syukri et al., 2025; Widayat, Nurmandi, Rosilawati, Natshir, et al., 2022; Widayat, Nurmandi, Rosilawati, Qodir, et al., 2022; Yahya et al., 2024).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) emphasize that social media is characterized by interactivity, openness, and rapid information dissemination. These features make social media highly appealing to adolescents and university students who are in a phase of identity exploration and seeking social recognition. In the context of communication, social media blurs the boundaries between interpersonal and mass communication, as messages can be delivered personally while simultaneously reaching a wide audience.

Several international Scopus-indexed studies indicate that social media has transformed the structure and dynamics of social communication. Kietzmann et al. (2011) proposed seven functional blocks of social media—identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups—that explain how users build interactions and social relationships through digital platforms. This framework helps to understand that social media is not only used for exchanging messages but also for shaping communication patterns and long-term social relationships.

### ***Teenagers, Students, and the Intensity of Social Media Use***

Adolescents and university students represent the age groups with the highest rates of social media adoption. Lenhart et al. (2015) noted that the majority of adolescents and young adults use social media daily, often for extended periods. This intensity of use not only affects the frequency of communication but also influences the style and quality of social interactions. University students, particularly freshmen, use social media as a primary means to establish

friendships, maintain previous relationships, and adapt to new social environments (Pempek et al., 2009).

On campus, social media is often utilized as a tool for informal communication among students, for both academic and non-academic purposes. Junco (2012) found that social media use among students correlates with social and academic engagement, although the impact depends heavily on the manner and purpose of use. Students who actively use social media for social interaction tend to have broader social networks, yet this does not necessarily translate into deeper or more meaningful communication.

Studies in Indonesia indexed in SINTA show similar trends. Putri and Nurhajati (2020) found that the intensity of social media use affects changes in students' communication styles, particularly through shorter, more informal, and symbolic language. Sari and Nugroho (2021) further observed that students tend to develop a more dominant pattern of digital communication compared to face-to-face interaction, especially during the early stages of their university education.

### ***Communication Patterns in the Context of Adolescents and Students***

Communication patterns refer to the ways, forms, and tendencies individuals use to interact with others, both verbally and nonverbally. According to Devito (2013), interpersonal communication patterns encompass aspects such as openness, empathy, support, positive attitudes, and equality. In the context of university students, these communication patterns develop in relation to social experiences, the academic environment, and the media used for interaction.

Social media provides a communication space that is relatively free from the constraints of time and space, but it also creates physical distance that can affect the quality of interactions. Valkenburg and Peter (2011) argue that online communication can strengthen social relationships if used to complement face-to-face interaction, but it can weaken relationships if it entirely replaces direct interaction. This indicates that the impact of social media on communication patterns is ambivalent.

Turkle (2015) critiques excessive use of digital media, highlighting its potential to reduce the depth of conversations and the ability to listen empathically. For new students, reliance on digital communication may hinder the development of essential interpersonal communication skills in both academic and social contexts. Therefore, it is important to examine how social media specifically and contextually influences students' communication patterns.

### ***Uses and Gratifications Theory as a Basis for Analysis***

This study employs the Uses and Gratifications Theory as its primary theoretical framework. Developed by Blumler and Katz (1974), this theory is based on the assumption that individuals are active and rational media users. Media users consciously select specific media to satisfy particular needs, such as information, entertainment, social integration, and personal identity.

In the context of social media, the Uses and Gratifications Theory is widely applied to explain the motivations of adolescents and university students in using digital platforms. Whiting and Williams (2013) identified several key motives for social media use, including social communication, information seeking, entertainment, and self-expression. These motives are closely related to the communication patterns that emerge in daily interactions.

First-semester students at FISIP UMPR can be understood as individuals using social media to meet social adaptation needs within the campus environment. Social media serves as a tool for establishing initial relationships, seeking academic information, and maintaining connections with their previous social environment. However, the intensity and motives for social media use may influence how students communicate both directly and indirectly.

Based on theoretical and previous research, this study positions social media as the independent variable and students' communication patterns as the dependent variable. Social media is measured through usage intensity, types of platforms used, and purposes of use.

Communication patterns are assessed through tendencies in interpersonal communication, comfort in face-to-face interaction, and the quality of social interactions.

The conceptual framework emphasizes that higher intensity of social media use increases the likelihood of changes in students' communication patterns. These changes can be either positive or negative, depending on the context and manner of social media use. This framework forms the basis for empirically analyzing the relationship between social media and the communication patterns of first-semester students at FISIP UMPR.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory approach to analyze the influence of social media on student communication patterns. Data collection was conducted using a survey method, using a closed-ended questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The study was conducted at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Palangka Raya (UMPR), with a population of all first-semester students. Purposive sampling was used, with the criteria being active first-semester students who used social media. This resulted in a sample size of 150 respondents.

The independent variable in this study was social media, measured by the intensity and purpose of use. The dependent variable was student communication patterns, which included interpersonal communication tendencies and digital communication preferences. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression to determine the influence of social media on student communication patterns. All data analysis was performed using SPSS software at a significance level of 0.05.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study indicate that social media has a significant influence on the communication patterns of first-semester students at FISIP UMPR. These results confirm that social media is not merely a source of entertainment but has become a primary medium for building and maintaining social relationships among new students. This aligns with the Uses and Gratifications perspective, which posits that individuals actively select media to satisfy social and communication needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974). First-year students use social media as a tool for social adaptation in the new campus environment, particularly to establish friendships and maintain connections with previous social networks.

These findings are also consistent with previous research showing that the intensity of social media use affects changes in communication styles and preferences among adolescents and university students. Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) note that social media can expand social networks and enhance connectedness, but this does not necessarily improve the quality of interpersonal communication. In the context of FISIP UMPR students, high social media use encourages the formation of digitally oriented communication patterns, characterized by greater comfort in communicating through short messages compared to face-to-face interactions.

On the other hand, the study also indicates a tendency for decreased direct communication. This phenomenon aligns with Turkle's (2015) view that reliance on digital communication can reduce the depth of conversation and empathetic listening in social interactions. First-semester students, who are still in the early stages of developing interpersonal communication skills, may experience difficulties in building effective face-to-face communication if social media is overused.

However, the influence of social media on communication patterns cannot be understood deterministically. Valkenburg and Peter (2011) emphasize that its impact depends heavily on the context of use and the user's purpose. In this study, social media does not entirely replace direct communication but functions as a complement to students' social interactions. It facilitates initial communication and helps maintain relationships, while face-to-face interaction remains essential for developing deeper and more meaningful connections.

Contextually, the findings of this study enrich the understanding of communication within higher education settings, particularly outside major urban areas. The diverse social and cultural backgrounds of FISIP UMPR students influence how they use social media for communication. Social media provides a relatively safe and flexible space for new students to express themselves

and build social relationships without the pressures of direct interaction. These findings suggest that higher education institutions need to recognize the role of social media in students' social adaptation while also promoting the development of interpersonal communication skills.

These results can also be interpreted through the lens of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), which explains that technology-based communication has characteristics distinct from face-to-face interaction, especially regarding nonverbal cues and emotional closeness. In digital communication, students tend to rely on symbols, emoticons, and brief language to convey messages, often simplifying the meaning of interactions. This contributes to the development of faster and more practical communication patterns, but it may reduce the depth of messages and the quality of interpersonal interaction. Among first-semester FISIP UMPR students, this pattern is reflected in the tendency to use social media as the primary means of initial communication, while face-to-face interaction develops more gradually.

Furthermore, the high intensity of social media use among new students is also linked to the need for social acceptance and identity formation. The early stage of university represents a critical period for self-exploration and social adjustment. Social media provides a platform for presenting one's identity, gaining recognition, and fostering a sense of belonging within certain social groups. This aligns with research indicating that social media functions as a medium for identity negotiation among adolescents and young adults (Boyd, 2014). For FISIP students, this need is further amplified by academic demands that emphasize active communication and social engagement.

However, reliance on social media as the primary medium of communication can pose challenges to the development of interpersonal communication skills. Students who are more accustomed to digital communication tend to experience awkwardness in direct interactions, particularly in formal settings such as class discussions, presentations, and academic forums. This is an important consideration for higher education institutions, especially faculties of social and political sciences, which regard communication as a core graduate competency. The findings of this study reinforce the argument that social media should be positioned as a complementary tool, rather than a replacement, for face-to-face communication in academic learning and interaction.

Empirically, this study also extends previous research in Indonesia, which generally focused on high school students or university students in general without distinguishing by semester level. By focusing on first-semester students, the study demonstrates that the influence of social media on communication patterns is stronger during the early stage of university life, when students are still undergoing social adaptation. This suggests that institutional interventions, such as media literacy programs and interpersonal communication training, should be implemented from the first semester.

Furthermore, the local context of UMPR provides an additional dimension for understanding these findings. As a university in Central Kalimantan, UMPR enrolls students from diverse geographical and social backgrounds. Social media serves as a bridge for social and cultural distance among students, particularly for those from outside the city. In this regard, social media acts positively as a medium of social integration. However, without proper guidance, dominant use of social media can hinder the internalization of academic communication values based on direct dialogue and critical thinking.

The results indicate that social media has a significant impact on the communication patterns and socio-political dynamics of first-semester students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya. Social media functions as a primary tool for building social networks, negotiating personal identity, and facilitating social adaptation on campus. High intensity of social media use encourages the formation of efficient and comfortable digital communication patterns, but also shows a reduction in face-to-face interaction and potential obstacles in developing interpersonal skills. In the socio-political context, social media influences students' participation, awareness, and engagement with social and political issues on campus, while also serving as an integrative space for students from diverse social and geographic backgrounds. Thus, the influence of social media is multidimensional: it supports initial communication and social connectedness, but institutional interventions through media literacy and interpersonal communication training are necessary to ensure that digital communication patterns are balanced with face-to-face interaction, enabling students to optimally develop their social, academic, and political competencies.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that social media has a significant influence on the communication patterns and socio-political dynamics of first-semester students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Muhammadiyah University of Palangka Raya. The high intensity of social media use encourages the formation of digital-based communication patterns, which increases students' comfort with online interactions compared to face-to-face communication. Social media plays a primary role in the social adaptation process for new students, particularly in building friendships and maintaining social networks, while also influencing student participation and awareness of socio-political issues on campus. However, the dominance of digital communication also indicates a tendency to decrease the intensity and quality of direct interpersonal communication, so that the influence of social media on communication patterns is ambivalent, providing both convenience and challenges to the development of students' interpersonal skills.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that faculties and universities pay special attention to strengthening interpersonal communication skills from the early semesters. Academic and student activities should be designed to encourage face-to-face interactions, such as group discussions, class presentations, and dialogue forums, to balance the intensive use of social media. In addition, further research is suggested to develop this study by adding other variables, such as media literacy, communication self-confidence, or gender differences, and using a mixed methods approach, in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the socio-political dynamics and communication patterns of students in the digital era.

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