



Optimizing the Use of Social Media as a Learning Tool in the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at An-Nizam Senior High School

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A B S T R A C T

The world of education today is inseparable from the development of social media, which is increasingly used as a learning tool by both teachers and students. The use of social media offers numerous benefits for learning activities, both in school and at home. In line with this, the Merdeka Curriculum introduced by the Indonesian government encourages schools to utilize internet access as part of the learning process. This study aims to explore the significant role of social media in the educational environment, particularly in enhancing learning within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. The research was conducted at SMA An-Nizam through Classroom Action Research (CAR), involving 29 students from Grade XI Science (Al-Khawarizmi class) as respondents. Data were collected using a student questionnaire. The findings reveal that 23 students spend more than four hours daily accessing the internet, 21 students actively use social media as a learning tool, and 20 students reported improved mastery of applications due to learning through social media platforms. These results indicate that social media plays an important role in supporting the implementation of independent and flexible learning.

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1. Introduction

The rapid growth of social media has become an inevitable phenomenon in modern society, significantly influencing daily life, including the field of education. In the era of globalization, social media has transformed how people communicate, work, shop, and learn. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of social media, as restrictions on physical interaction required individuals to rely on digital platforms for various activities, including education. Even in the post-pandemic era, the habit of using social media persists, with many individuals continuing to depend on it for information, communication, and learning.

In education, social media serves not only as a communication tool but also as a means to support and enhance learning. It facilitates interaction without requiring physical presence, expands access to knowledge, and promotes collaborative learning. During the pandemic, platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and Google Meet became essential tools for conducting online learning, enabling teachers and students to stay connected despite geographical barriers. These tools exemplify the potential of social media to support flexible, efficient, and inclusive education.

Social media also promotes collaborative learning, allowing students to engage in discussions and share ideas beyond the physical boundaries of the classroom. It fosters student autonomy and digital literacy, which are essential skills in the 21st century. However, despite its advantages, the use of social media in education also presents several challenges. Students may become distracted by non-educational content or overly reliant on digital tools, which can hinder critical thinking and academic focus. Therefore, the role of educators and parents is crucial in guiding students to use social media responsibly and purposefully.

In Indonesian schools, including SMA An-Nizam, social media has started to be integrated into the learning process. While students are encouraged to use technology for educational purposes, the school also enforces regulations to prevent misuse. For instance, students are not allowed to use mobile phones during class without teacher supervision, aiming to maintain a balance between the benefits of digital tools and the need for academic discipline. This reflects a broader concern in education today: how to effectively incorporate technology while minimizing its potential risks.

Given these dynamics, there is a growing urgency to understand how social media can be optimized as a learning tool, particularly within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, which promotes student-centered and flexible learning. This study focuses on exploring the role and impact of social media in supporting learning activities at SMA An-Nizam, highlighting both its benefits and challenges in the context of 21st-century education.

2. Research Methods

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) method, which involves the direct engagement of the researcher in the classroom setting. The primary objective of the research was to enhance students' learning motivation during instructional activities and to strengthen their ability to comprehend subject matter effectively. The study was conducted at SMA An-Nizam, located at Jalan Tuba II No.62, Tegal Sari Mandala III, Medan Denai District, Medan City, North Sumatra, 20226.

The research was carried out in the XI Science class (Al-Khawarizmi), consisting of 29 students, who served as the study's subjects. Data collection was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires to gather students' perceptions and responses regarding the use of social media in the learning process. In addition, the researcher conducted classroom observations throughout the action research cycle to monitor learning activities and student engagement.

The research procedure followed the standard steps of Classroom Action Research, which typically includes planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The instrument used in this study consisted of structured questionnaires and observation sheets. The questionnaires were designed to measure students' engagement with social media as a learning tool, while observation sheets were used to document classroom behaviors and participation patterns.

Data collection techniques included administering questionnaires at designated intervals and recording observational data during classroom sessions. The data obtained were then analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to identify trends and summarize the students' learning behavior and attitudes. The findings were interpreted to assess the effectiveness of using social media as a supportive medium for learning and to formulate strategies for improving its implementation in future instructional practices.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that many students at SMA An-Nizam actively use social media as a learning tool and demonstrate a high level of familiarity with the platforms they utilize. Their ability to navigate and benefit from social media reflects a broader trend in Indonesian society, where digital technology has become deeply embedded in daily life. In 2016, the internet user growth rate in Indonesia reached approximately 51%, or around 45 million users, with 34% identified as

active social media users. Moreover, 39% of these users accessed social media via mobile devices. The majority of internet users in Indonesia are members of the millennial and Generation Z cohorts—generations born into the digital era where smartphones, social networking, and online commerce are part of everyday life (Apriansyah, 2020).

Social media itself has been defined in several academic contexts. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe it as a set of internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content, which involves a degree of self-disclosure and enables social presence. Similarly, Carr and Hayes (2015) define social media as internet-based channels that allow users to interact opportunistically and selectively, whether in real-time or asynchronously, with audiences ranging from broad to narrow, gaining value from both the content and the interactions it facilitates. According to Watie, social media blends two layers of communication—interpersonal and mass communication—into one integrated platform (Pujiono, 2021).

In educational contexts, learning media are defined as tools or forms of stimuli used to convey learning information. These stimuli may include human interaction, real-life experiences, images (moving or still), text, and audio recordings (Rahman et al., 2023). Social media, therefore, plays a crucial role in advancing education in Indonesia, ensuring that students remain engaged with technological developments that are essential to 21st-century learning.

In practice, social media can support the learning process by clarifying instructional content and providing access to diverse learning resources. Effective use of social media requires collaboration between teachers and students to promote responsible usage. Teachers are also encouraged to set clear boundaries and time restrictions regarding students' social media activity during learning hours. The current study reveals that many students at SMA An-Nizam have not yet developed adequate digital discipline. Empirical data show that a significant number of students exceed recommended screen time limits during school hours, often engaging with non-educational content.

The following section presents data on internet usage among Grade XI Science students at SMA An-Nizam, which further illustrates the pattern of media consumption and its implications for learning effectiveness. The results highlight the urgent need for digital literacy education and structured guidance to ensure that social media serves as a positive and constructive learning medium.

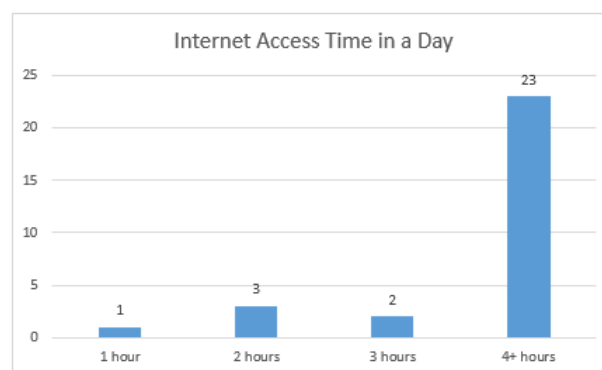


Figure 1. Internet access time in a day

Based on the collected data, it can be explained that among the Grade XI Science students at SMA An-Nizam, one student reported using the internet for 1 hour per day, three students reported using it for 2 hours per day, and two students used it for 3 hours per day. The majority, however, consisted of 23 students who reported accessing the internet for more than 4 hours daily. These findings suggest that internet usage among students is relatively high, particularly outside structured learning times.

Given this data, it is important to encourage students to manage their internet usage more wisely, especially concerning time allocation. Within the school environment, internet access should be

limited strictly to learning activities during instructional hours to ensure that students remain focused on academic content. Similarly, at home, parents and guardians are advised to monitor and regulate their children's internet use to prevent excessive engagement that could interfere with other responsibilities and healthy habits.

Moreover, the study found that students access the internet not solely for learning purposes. Many students reported having additional reasons and specific objectives when using the internet. The following section presents the data on students' activities while accessing the internet, highlighting the variety of their online engagements and underscoring the importance of fostering responsible internet usage habits both in educational and personal contexts.

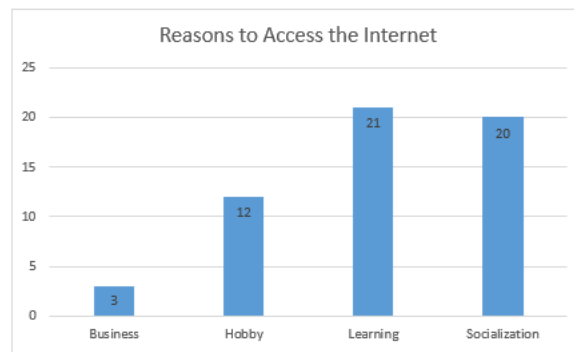


Figure 2. Reasons to access the internet

The reasons students access the internet vary considerably. The study found that 3 students reported using the internet primarily for business purposes, 12 students used it to pursue their hobbies, 21 students accessed it for learning activities, and 20 students utilized it for socialization. These findings illustrate that social media and internet usage among students are not limited solely to educational activities but also extend to other personal interests and goals.

Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that the use of social media as a learning tool remains one of its most significant educational contributions. Learning media, including social media platforms, serve as essential tools to support the achievement of learning objectives effectively and efficiently. Within the learning process, social media can function to clarify instructional material and act as a source of learning content that students can access and engage with independently (Aprilizdihar et al., 2022).

In addition to utilizing social media for learning, business, and leisure activities, many students have also demonstrated an increasing knowledge of computer literacy. Their frequent engagement with digital platforms not only supports their academic development but also enhances their technological competence, an essential skill in today's digital age. The following section presents data regarding students' levels of computer literacy, illustrating the broader impact of media usage beyond social interaction and entertainment.

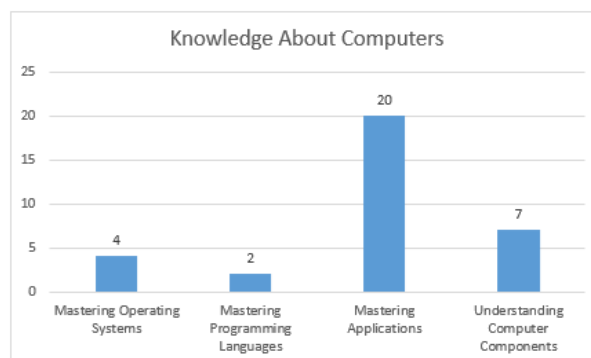


Figure 3. Knowledge about computers

Based on the data, it can be concluded that among the students surveyed, 4 students demonstrated proficiency in operating systems, 2 students had knowledge of programming languages, 20 students were proficient in using various applications, and 7 students understood computer components. These findings suggest that the use of social media and internet access has positively contributed to students' learning and expansion of their technological knowledge.

However, despite these positive impacts, it is crucial to establish clear limitations regarding internet usage time. Without appropriate boundaries, students may become overly focused on social media activities, which could detract from their academic responsibilities and overall productivity. Therefore, it is essential for both educators and parents to guide students in using the internet responsibly, ensuring that its use remains balanced between learning purposes and personal interests.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that many students have not yet used their time wisely when engaging with social media, as evidenced by the majority of students spending more than four hours per day online. Furthermore, students utilize social media not only for learning purposes but also for business activities, hobbies, and socialization. In addition, students demonstrated varying levels of knowledge regarding computer-related skills, such as operating systems, programming languages, application usage, and computer components. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers and parents actively supervise and regulate students' internet usage, especially during study hours, to ensure that students remain focused on their academic tasks. Schools should implement clear guidelines on internet access during class time, while also encouraging students to develop a more meaningful and productive use of social media to support their long-term educational and personal growth.

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