EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INTENSITY ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT
University students in Indonesia are experiencing emerging adulthood, a period marked by identity exploration, instability, and heightened sensitivity to social feedback, making psychological well-being (PWB) a critical resource for adaptive functioning. Social media has become central to students' academic coordination, social connection, and identity work, yet its effects on well-being remain debated internationally and locally. This study aimed to examine the relationship between social media usage intensity and PWB among undergraduate students of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), Universitas Sanata Dharma, cohort 2021. A quantitative correlational design was employed, using proportionally distributed samples (N = 278) from the faculty. Social media intensity was operationalized across four dimensions—attention, immersion, duration, and frequency—while PWB was assessed using Ryff's six dimensions. Data were collected through validated Likert-scale questionnaires (reliability: $\alpha = 0.993$ for intensity; $\alpha = 0.907$ for PWB) and analyzed using Spearman's rho correlation. Results showed that most students reported high to very high intensity (73.7%) and high to very high PWB (66.2%). A small but significant negative correlation emerged between intensity and PWB ($\rho = -0.134$, $p = .026$), indicating that heavier use is modestly associated with lower well-being. The study concludes that while social media engagement is pervasive, its negative impact on PWB is minimal at the cohort level, suggesting that individual usage patterns and regulatory skills moderate outcomes. Findings are beneficial for guiding digital literacy programs, well-being modules, and nuanced policies focusing on purposeful, active engagement. Future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs and differentiate between active and passive use.

Keywords: Digital literacy, Psychological well-being, Social media intensity, University students, Usage patterns

INTRODUCTION

University students in Indonesia are navigating the transition of emerging adulthood, a developmental period marked by identity exploration, instability, and heightened sensitivity to social feedback (Arnett, 2000; Miller, 2011). In this stage, students are expected to master new academic, social, and self-regulatory demands while building future-oriented goals. Their psychological well-being (PWB)—defined as positive functioning across self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, autonomy, positive relations, and personal growth—becomes pivotal for sustained academic engagement and adaptive coping (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Ruini, 2017). Concurrently, social media has become a ubiquitous arena for information exchange, identity work, and social connection (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Platforms offer clear benefits—social capital, informational support, and opportunities for self-expression—and equally clear risks, including social comparison, rumination, and distraction (Appel, Gerlach, & Crusius, 2016; Verduyn et al., 2017; Meier & Reinecke, 2020). Prior studies associate intensive, especially passive, social media use with greater loneliness, depressive affect, and lower PWB, although effect sizes vary and boundary conditions remain debated (Kross et al., 2013; Primack et al., 2017; Hunt, Allcott, & Braghieri, 2018; Pantic, 2014; Orben & Przybylski, 2019; Valkenburg, Meier, & Beyens, 2022; Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020). Within the Indonesian context, local evidence points to similar patterns: time spent and frequency of social media use relate to stress, anxiety, or diminished mental health among university students, yet findings are mixed regarding the direction and magnitude of associations (Astuti & Wardani, 2019; Rahman, Nawal, Insani, & Tobing, 2021; Sa'diyah, Naskiyah, & Rosyadi, 2022; Al Aziz, 2020; Sholehah, 2023). Because PWB is eudaimonic—concerned not merely with mood but with meaning, growth, and functioning—it is crucial to disentangle whether intensity of social media use (attention, comprehension/immersion, duration, frequency) predicts lower PWB or whether differential patterns of use might be benign or even beneficial under certain conditions (Waterman, 1993; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Verduyn et al., 2017; Meier & Reinecke, 2020).

Two core problems motivate this study. First, evidence about the linkage between social media intensity and PWB among Indonesian undergraduates—especially within education faculties—is inconclusive. Some studies report negative associations (e.g., higher intensity ↔ worse mental health), while others suggest small or context-dependent effects (Astuti & Wardani, 2019; Rahman et al., 2021; Sa'diyah et al., 2022; Orben & Przybylski, 2019; Valkenburg et al., 2022). Second, much local work operationalizes "well-being" via stress, depression, or life satisfaction rather

than Ryff's multidimensional PWB, limiting theoretical precision (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008). A general solution is to (a) measure intensity with multiple behavioral facets (duration, frequency, attentional salience, and depth of immersion) and (b) assess PWB comprehensively using a validated eudaimonic model. This enables a more nuanced analysis that can detect small effects and clarify whether high intensity is uniformly harmful, conditionally harmful (e.g., during passive consumption), or buffered by adaptive practices (Verduyn et al., 2017; Meier & Reinecke, 2020; Valkenburg et al., 2022).

International literature suggests three actionable directions to sharpen measurement and interpretation: (a) Differentiate how students use social media. Passive browsing (e.g., scrolling) is more consistently linked to negative affect, whereas active, reciprocal interaction can be neutral or beneficial via social support and meaning-making (Verduyn et al., 2017; Appel et al., 2016; Berryman, Ferguson, & Negy, 2018; Meier & Reinecke, 2020). (b) Emphasize self-regulation and time-management. Experimental work shows that reducing usage yields improvements in well-being and loneliness, supporting causal interpretations at least for high-intensity users (Hunt et al., 2018). Interventions that set boundaries (duration/frequency caps), disable nonessential notifications, or restructure routines can mitigate problematic engagement (Primack et al., 2017; Keles et al., 2020). (c) Align outcomes with eudaimonic frameworks. Using Ryff's PWB isolates functional aspects—autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose—relevant for university success (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Ruini, 2017). This lens complements symptom-based outcomes, reducing conceptual noise and improving theoretical accumulation (Waterman, 1993; Meier & Reinecke, 2020). Together, these strands suggest that a multidimensional intensity index paired with Ryff's PWB can clarify whether and how intense engagement relates to optimal functioning among Indonesian undergraduates (Verduyn et al., 2017; Valkenburg et al., 2022; Ryff & Singer, 2008).

Indonesian studies document widespread social media engagement among students and potential links to mental health risks, but they often conflate hedonic outcomes (affect, symptoms) with eudaimonic functioning or rely on one-dimensional time-based indicators (Astuti & Wardani, 2019; Rahman et al., 2021; Sa'diyah et al., 2022). For example, time-on-platform is variably associated with distress, yet such metrics cannot distinguish attentional salience (preoccupation), depth of immersion (ruminative scrolling), or interactional quality (active vs. passive) that theory says matter (Appel et al., 2016; Verduyn et al., 2017; Meier & Reinecke, 2020). Beyond Indonesia, meta-analytic and programmatic reviews converge on small average effects with substantial heterogeneity, implying that context (culture, cohort, academic demands) and usage patterns moderate associations (Orben & Przybylski, 2019; Valkenburg et al., 2022; Keles et al., 2020). Experimental and longitudinal studies indicate plausible causality for heavy passive use, but these designs are underrepresented in local settings and seldom tie outcomes to Ryff's PWB (Kross et al., 2013; Hunt et al., 2018; Primack et al., 2017; Pantic, 2014). Within education faculties, where professional identity, practicum pressures, and pedagogical socialization are salient, there is little evidence that precisely connects intensity (attention, comprehension/immersion, duration, frequency) to eudaimonic PWB. Local theses and articles (e.g., Sholehah, 2023; Al Aziz, 2020; Rahman et al., 2021; Astuti & Wardani, 2019; Sa'diyah et al., 2022) provide valuable groundwork but rarely (i) deploy multifaceted intensity measures, (ii) use Ryff's full PWB as the primary outcome, and (iii) focus on a single, well-defined cohort to reduce confounds. This triangulation gap—measurement, theory, and context—motivates the present study.

This study tests the association between social media intensity—operationalized through attention (salience/preoccupation), comprehension/immersion (depth of cognitive-affective engagement), duration (time), and frequency (checks/visits)—and psychological well-being per Ryff's six dimensions among students of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), cohort 2021, Universitas Sanata Dharma. The focus on a single cohort constrains developmental and curricular variance while reflecting the emerging-adult developmental tasks salient in teacher-education pathways (Arnett, 2000; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008). The study foregrounds eudaimonic PWB rather than symptom-based proxies, aligning measurement with theoretical claims about positive functioning in higher education (Ryff, 1989; Ruini, 2017). By integrating attention and immersion alongside duration and frequency, the study captures qualitative engagement features implicated in social comparison and rumination (Verduyn et al., 2017; Appel et al., 2016; Meier & Reinecke, 2020). Evidence is generated from an Indonesian teacher-education cohort, addressing cultural and institutional contexts underrepresented in the literature (Astuti & Wardani, 2019; Rahman et al., 2021; Sa'diyah et al., 2022; Sholehah, 2023). The primary hypothesis posits a negative association between overall intensity of social media use and psychological well-being (H1: higher intensity ↔ lower PWB). This is grounded in research linking passive/high-salience usage to increased social comparison, reduced environmental mastery, and diminished autonomy and purpose—core PWB dimensions (Kross et al., 2013; Verduyn et al., 2017; Appel et al., 2016; Meier & Reinecke, 2020; Primack et al., 2017; Keles et al., 2020). At the same time, we acknowledge competing evidence of small average effects and potential boundary conditions, which the study addresses via multifaceted intensity metrics and dimension-level PWB analyses (Orben & Przybylski, 2019; Valkenburg et al., 2022). The study is cross-sectional and limited to FKIP cohort 2021 at Universitas Sanata Dharma. It emphasizes individual differences

in intensity and PWB, not platform-specific affordances. While causality cannot be inferred, the design enables theory-consistent tests of whether attentional salience/immersion disproportionately relates to lower autonomy, environmental mastery, or purpose, beyond duration/frequency (Ryff, 1989; Verduyn et al., 2017; Meier & Reinecke, 2020). Findings will inform well-being-oriented digital literacy initiatives and time-management strategies suitable for teacher-education contexts (Hunt et al., 2018; Primack et al., 2017; Keles et al., 2020).

METHOD

Research Design

The study applied a quantitative correlational design to investigate the relationship between the intensity of social media use and psychological well-being among undergraduate students. This design was selected because it is suitable for examining associations between naturally occurring variables without manipulating them. Quantitative approaches provide the advantage of efficient data collection through structured questionnaires, statistical testing of hypotheses, and generalizability of findings. A correlational design specifically helps to determine the strength and direction of associations between social media intensity and well-being (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Solimun, Armanu, & Fernandes in Santoso, 2021).

Research Site and Timeline

The research was conducted at Sanata Dharma University, specifically within the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), which is located in Sleman, Yogyakarta. Data collection was carried out between 4 February and 12 February 2025, a period that included questionnaire distribution, completion by students, and retrieval for processing.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of 905 undergraduate students from the 2021 cohort of FKIP at Sanata Dharma University, as reported in the official annual statistics of March 2024. From this population, a sample of 278 students was determined using Slovin's formula with a margin of error of five percent. The sample was proportionally distributed across all study programs within the faculty to ensure representativeness.

Operational Definitions of Variables

The independent variable in this study was social media usage intensity, defined as the degree to which individuals actively and repeatedly engage with social media platforms. This construct included dimensions such as attention, immersion, duration, and frequency. The dependent variable was psychological well-being, conceptualized as a multidimensional state of optimal functioning consisting of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008).

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire. This method was chosen because closed-ended questions provide standardized responses, facilitate scoring, and allow statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2019). The questionnaire consisted of 92 items, with 42 items measuring psychological well-being and 50 items measuring social media intensity. Each item used a four-point Likert scale, ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. For favorable items, higher scores indicated more positive responses, while for unfavorable items the scoring was reversed.

Table 1. Scoring Scheme for Favorable and Unfavorable Items

Response Option	Favorable Score	Unfavorable Score
Strongly Agree	4	1
Agree	3	2
Disagree	2	3
Strongly Disagree	1	4

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Content validity was first established through expert judgment by academic supervisors. Construct validity was then assessed using JASP software. Items that did not meet the required validity standards were removed. For the psychological well-being scale, 35 items were found valid while 7 were invalid. For the social media intensity scale, 46 items were valid and 4 were invalid.

Table 2. Validity Test of Psychological Well-Being Items

Aspect	Item Numbers	Valid	Invalid
Autonomy	1–4, 22–24	1, 2, 23, 24	3, 4, 22
Environmental Mastery	5–7, 25–28	All valid	–
Personal Growth	8–10, 29–32	8, 9, 30–32	10, 29
Positive Relations	11–14, 33–35	11–13, 33–35	14
Purpose in Life	15–17, 36–39	16–17, 36–39	15
Self-Acceptance	18–21, 40–42	All valid	–

Table 3. Validity Test of Social Media Usage Intensity Items

Aspect	Item Numbers	Valid	Invalid
Attention	1–9, 26–34	4–9, 26–34	1–3
Immersion	10–14, 35–39	All valid	–
Duration	15–20, 40–45	All valid	–
Frequency	21–25, 46–50	21–24, 46–49	25, 50

Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha in JASP version 0.18.0.0. A reliability coefficient above 0.70 was considered acceptable (Taber, 2018). The psychological well-being scale obtained an alpha of 0.907, while the social media intensity scale obtained 0.993. These results indicate very high reliability for both instruments.

Table 4. Reliability Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Category
Social Media Usage Intensity	0.993	Very High
Psychological Well-Being	0.907	Very High

Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis involved several stages. First, responses were scored according to the Likert scaling scheme, with favorable and unfavorable items coded appropriately. Next, participants' total scores for both variables were computed. To interpret these scores, data were categorized into five levels—very high, high, moderate, low, and very low—based on mean and standard deviation. Normality testing was performed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, with data considered normal if the significance value was above 0.05. Linearity testing was conducted to confirm whether the relationship between the two variables was linear. Finally, hypothesis testing was carried out using Pearson's correlation coefficient, with statistical significance set at 0.05. This allowed the study to determine the presence, strength, and direction of the relationship between social media usage intensity and psychological well-being.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Relationship Between Social Media Usage Intensity and Psychological Well-Being

As a prerequisite check, a Shapiro–Wilk normality test was run in JASP (version 0.18.0.0). The output reported the Shapiro–Wilk test with a p value of 0.959, indicating that the distribution under test did not deviate significantly from normality at conventional thresholds. The decision to analyze associations with Spearman's rho (reported below) remains reasonable given the ordinal Likert scaling of item scores and the study's emphasis on rank-order association rather than linear parametric assumptions (Hauke & Kossowski, 2011; Cohen, 1988).

Table 5. Normality test results (psychological well-being and social media intensity)

Fit Statistics	
Test	P
Shapiro–Wilk	0.959

The study also examined a linearity plot (simple regression fit with scatter). Visual inspection showed that most points clustered around the regression line, with only modest dispersion. In words, the cloud of points suggested an approximately linear (though weak) trend, supporting the suitability of linear-trend-based interpretation (e.g., Pearson) while the analysis proceeded conservatively with Spearman, consistent with the measurement level. The key bivariate test used Spearman's rho to correlate social media usage intensity with psychological well-being. Results are presented below.

Table 6. Correlational test (Spearman's rho)

Correlation table	Psychological Well-Being	Social Media Usage Intensity
1. Psychological Well-Being	Spearman's rho	
	p-value	
2. Social Media Usage Intensity	Spearman's rho	–0.134*
	p-value	0.026

Notes: * indicates statistical significance as flagged in the original output; the single asterisk in the source narrative was interpreted as $p < .05$ with a small effect size.

The correlation is negative and small in magnitude (rho = –0.134) and statistically significant at the .05 level ($p = .026$). Directionally, higher intensity is associated with slightly lower psychological well-being. However, the size of the association is weak (Cohen, 1988). Whether this supports or rejects the a priori hypothesis depends on how the hypothesis was framed: if the hypothesis predicted any negative association (H1), the sign and p-value are consistent with support; if the hypothesis required a substantively strong correlation, the effect would be judged too small for practical significance. The original narrative accompanying the table considered the effect "not strong" and proceeded to treat H0 as retained; our interpretation below clarifies this nuance. A pie chart was created to visualize respondents across study programs. Although numeric shares were not provided in the text, the figure's descriptive purpose was to show that multiple programs contributed participants, consistent with proportional sampling from all FKIP programs.

Category Levels of Social Media Usage Intensity

To contextualize intensity scores, the study created theory-referenced cutoffs using item counts and Likert scaling. With 46 valid items and four response options, the theoretical maximum score was 184 and the minimum 46. The theoretical mean was 115, and bands around the mean used half- and one-and-a-half-standard-deviation rules for five categories (very low to very high).

Table 7. Social media usage intensity scale (category bands)

Norm	Interval	Category
$\mu + 1.5\sigma < X$	$149.5 < X$	Very high
$\mu + 0.5\sigma < X \leq \mu + 1.5\sigma$	$126.5 < X \leq 149.5$	High
$\mu - 0.5\sigma < X \leq \mu + 0.5\sigma$	$103.5 < X \leq 126.5$	Moderate
$\mu - 1.5\sigma < X \leq \mu - 0.5\sigma$	$80.5 < X \leq 103.5$	Low
$X \leq \mu - 1.5\sigma$	$X \leq 80.5$	Very low

Applying these thresholds to the sample (N = 278) yielded the following distribution.

Table 8. Categorization of social media usage intensity

Norm	Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
$\mu + 1.5\sigma < X$	$X > 150$	Very high	92	33.1%
$\mu + 0.5\sigma < X \leq \mu + 1.5\sigma$	$127 < X \leq 150$	High	113	40.6%
$\mu - 0.5\sigma < X \leq \mu + 0.5\sigma$	$104 < X \leq 127$	Moderate	70	25.2%
$\mu - 1.5\sigma < X \leq \mu - 0.5\sigma$	$81 < X \leq 104$	Low	3	1.1%
$X \leq \mu - 1.5\sigma$	$X \leq 81$	Very low	0	0.0%
Total			278	100%

A large majority of students reported high or very high intensity: 40.6% high and 33.1% very high (combined 73.7%). One quarter (25.2%) were moderate, and only 1.1% low, with nobody in the very-low band. A bar chart (described in the source) depicted these proportions: the tallest bars were "high" (≈41%) and "very high" (≈33%), followed by "moderate" (≈25%), with a very small bar for "low" and none for "very low."

Category Levels of Psychological Well-Being

For PWB (Ryff's model), 35 valid items were scored. The theoretical maximum was 140 and minimum 35, with a theoretical mean of 87.5. As with intensity, five category bands were defined relative to the mean.

Table 9. Psychological well-being scale

Norm	Interval	Category
$\mu + 1.5\sigma < X$	$113.75 < X$	Very high

Norm	Interval	Category
$\mu + 0.5\sigma < X \leq \mu + 1.5\sigma$	$96.25 < X \leq 113.75$	High
$\mu - 0.5\sigma < X \leq \mu + 0.5\sigma$	$78.75 < X \leq 96.25$	Moderate
$\mu - 1.5\sigma < X \leq \mu - 0.5\sigma$	$61.25 < X \leq 78.75$	Low
$X \leq \mu - 1.5\sigma$	$X \leq 61.25$	Very low

Applying these thresholds produced the following distribution.

Table 13. Categorization of psychological well-being

Norm	Interval	Category	Frequency	Percentage
$\mu + 1.5\sigma < X$	$X > 114$	Very high	15	5.40%
$\mu + 0.5\sigma < X \leq \mu + 1.5\sigma$	$97 < X \leq 114$	High	169	60.79%
$\mu - 0.5\sigma < X \leq \mu + 0.5\sigma$	$79 < X \leq 97$	Moderate	63	22.66%
$\mu - 1.5\sigma < X \leq \mu - 0.5\sigma$	$62 < X \leq 79$	Low	31	11.15%
$X \leq \mu - 1.5\sigma$	$X \leq 62$	Very low	0	0.00%
Total			278	100%

Most students reported high PWB (60.79%), with an additional 5.40% at very high. About one in five (22.66%) were moderate, and 11.15% were low. None fell into very low. A bar chart (described in the source) visualized these distributions with the "high" bar clearly dominating. First, social media usage intensity among FKIP 2021 students is predominantly high to very high (73.7% combined), a pattern consistent with Generation Z's embeddedness in digital ecosystems for academic coordination, information seeking, and social connection. Second, psychological well-being is likewise favorable: nearly two-thirds (66.2%) are high/very high, with only 11.2% low and none very low. Third, the association between intensity and PWB is negative, small, and statistically significant (rho = –0.134, p = .026). Directionally, students who report more intense usage tend to report marginally lower PWB, but the effect size is weak by conventional benchmarks (Cohen, 1988). Taken together, the cohort exhibits both high digital engagement and generally healthy well-being, with only a modest trade-off between the two. The a priori hypothesis (H1) posited a negative relationship between social media intensity and PWB. The empirical sign and p-value align with this prediction, though the magnitude is small. If the inferential criterion was strictly direction plus non-zero association, H1 is supported. If, however, the criterion was practical importance (e.g., medium effect or above), one could argue the relationship is too small to matter substantively and, therefore, functionally consistent with H0 for practical purposes. In short, statistical significance is present, but practical significance appears limited. This nuance is common in contemporary digital-well-being research (Orben & Przybylski, 2019; Meier & Reinecke, 2020; Valkenburg, Meier, & Beyens, 2022; Johannes, Meier, Reinecke, & Bastian, 2021).

A clear pattern is the co-occurrence of high intensity and high PWB at the group level. The small negative correlation indicates that these two distributions are not independent, yet the overlap is substantial: many students use social media intensely without reporting diminished PWB. This suggests considerable heterogeneity—that is, the impact of intensity likely depends on how students use social media (active vs. passive), why they use it (instrumental vs. escapist motives), and who they are (e.g., self-regulation, social comparison orientation, FoMO, personality, and social support) (Verduyn, Ybarra, Résibois, Jonides, & Kross, 2017; Appel, Gerlach, & Crusius, 2016; Reer, Tang, & Quandt, 2019; Beyens, Pouwels, van Driel, Keijsers, & Valkenburg, 2020; Aalbers et al., 2019; Tandoc, Ferrucci, & Duffy, 2015).

Small average effects. Meta-analyses and large-scale reviews frequently find small average links between screen or social media use and well-being or mental health, often $|r| < .15$ (Orben & Przybylski, 2019; Meier & Reinecke, 2020; Valkenburg et al., 2022; Huang, 2017; Ferguson, 2017). The present rho of –0.134 fits squarely within that range. Direction and boundary conditions. Research differentiates passive consumption (scrolling/observing) from active and socially reciprocal use (commenting, messaging, co-creation). Passive use is more consistently tied to worse affect through upward social comparison and rumination, whereas active, supportive exchanges can be neutral or beneficial (Verduyn et al., 2017; Appel et al., 2016; Frison & Eggermont, 2015; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Experimental and quasi-experimental studies show that reducing usage (especially passive use) can produce small improvements in loneliness and mood (Hunt, Marx, Lipson, & Young, 2018; Tromholt, 2016). The present study did not separate mode of engagement, which likely contributes to the weak overall effect. Within-person dynamics. Intensive longitudinal and experience-sampling work suggests that between-person correlations can be misleading about within-person effects; when individuals use more than usual, the change in well-being is often negligible or small, and effects vary widely across persons (Beyens et al., 2020; Johannes et al., 2021; Coyne et al., 2020). The current cross-sectional design is consistent with that broader pattern. Cultural and cohort context. In Indonesian

student samples, prior studies also report mixed associations between heavy use and mental health indicators, with effect sizes tending to be small and moderated by use purposes and support (Astuti & Wardani, 2019; Rahman, Nawal, Insani, & Tobing, 2021; Sa'diyah, Naskiyah, & Rosyadi, 2022). The present findings—high intensity coexisting with high PWB and a small negative link—are therefore convergent with both international and local evidence. Robustness in recent syntheses. Newer umbrella reviews emphasize the importance of measurement precision, pre-registration, and multiverse analyses; when these are applied, estimated effects often shrink further (Orben & Przybylski, 2019; Valkenburg et al., 2022; Coyne et al., 2020). Our reliance on validated PWB constructs (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008) is a strength; however, our intensity metric aggregates attention, immersion, duration, and frequency without distinguishing active vs. passive behaviors, a known moderator (Verduyn et al., 2017; Aalbers et al., 2019).

Importance and Contribution of the Findings

Clarifying magnitude. The study advances local evidence by quantifying the size of the association in a clearly defined Indonesian teacher-education cohort. Demonstrating a statistically significant yet small correlation is valuable for calibrating expectations: broad claims that "high social media use harms student well-being" are over-generalized without nuance regarding mode and motive of use (Meier & Reinecke, 2020; Valkenburg et al., 2022). Eudaimonic lens. Using Ryff's psychological well-being (autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose, positive relations, self-acceptance, growth) focuses on functioning, not merely symptoms. This perspective matters in teacher-education where autonomy, purpose, and relational skills are central. Our evidence that many high-intensity users still report high PWB suggests that purposeful, regulated engagement can coexist with healthy functioning (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Ruini, 2017). Context-specific insight. FKIP students often use social media for academic coordination, peer support, and resource sharing (e.g., messaging apps, group work). These uses can enhance social capital and perceived support, buffering potential harms of intensity (Ellison et al., 2007; Yang, 2016; Nabi, Prestin, & So, 2013). The small negative average effect leaves room for beneficial sub-patterns masked at the aggregate level.

Unexpected or Surprising Findings

Given the heavy levels of use, one might initially expect a stronger negative correlation. However, the weak association observed may be explained by several factors. First, much of the usage appears to be predominantly instrumental. When substantial portions of time are devoted to task-oriented activities such as course coordination or information seeking, negative affective mechanisms like upward social comparison are less likely to be triggered (Ellison et al., 2007; Yang, 2016). Second, high levels of digital literacy and self-regulation among students may also play a role. Those who can effectively set boundaries and curate their feeds are better able to avoid rumination triggers (Meier & Reinecke, 2020; Gentina & Chen, 2019). Third, the presence of supportive peer networks, such as within FKIP communities, may provide reciprocal support that buffers stress and enhances relatedness, an important dimension of psychological well-being (Nabi et al., 2013). Finally, methodological factors may also contribute, particularly the aggregation of measurement indicators. When attention, immersion, duration, and frequency are collapsed into a global index, specific harmful pathways like passive browsing or late-night use can become diluted, reducing the visibility of their negative effects (Aalbers et al., 2019; Orben & Przybylski, 2019).

Limitations and Constraints

Several limitations and constraints qualify the interpretation of this study. First, its cross-sectional design prevents establishing causality, leaving open the possibility of bidirectional effects; for example, lower psychological well-being may itself drive compensatory or escapist social media use among some students (Tandoc et al., 2015; Valkenburg et al., 2022). Second, reliance on self-report measures introduces risks of recall errors and social desirability bias, which could inflate or distort estimates. The extremely high internal consistency observed ($\alpha = .993$ for intensity) further suggests potential item redundancy or overly homogeneous content that limits construct validity (Taber, 2018). Third, the use of a global intensity metric obscures meaningful distinctions, as it fails to differentiate between active and passive engagement, the emotional valence of consumed content, platform-specific patterns, or contextual timing such as late-night usage—all factors known to moderate psychological outcomes (Verduyn et al., 2017; Beyens et al., 2020; Johannes et al., 2021). Fourth, the single-faculty sample restricts external validity, making generalization most appropriate to teacher-education cohorts within comparable cultural and institutional contexts. Finally, potential response-set artifacts pose another concern; segments of uniform responding across items noted in the original narratives may have attenuated observed associations, further limiting the precision of findings.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings of this study provide several important implications for students, instructors, university services, and policymakers. For students and instructors. The results underscore the importance of emphasizing purposeful and

active forms of engagement, such as discussion, collaboration, and peer support, rather than passive scrolling, which has been more consistently linked to negative affective outcomes (Verduyn et al., 2017; Aalbers et al., 2019). Both students and instructors can benefit from adopting self-regulation strategies, including scheduled checks, disabling non-essential notifications, setting time caps, and practicing night-mode hygiene to reduce disruptions in sleep and attention (Hunt et al., 2018; Meier & Reinecke, 2020). Additionally, cultivating feed curation and content literacy is crucial for minimizing upward social comparison and fear of missing out (FoMO), both of which are known to erode well-being (Reer et al., 2019; Beyens et al., 2020). For university services. Institutions should consider integrating digital well-being modules into orientation programs or study-skills courses. These modules can be framed within the six dimensions of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being (PWB) model, such as autonomy, environmental mastery, and positive relations, to ensure holistic student development (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Ruini, 2017). Social platforms can also be intentionally leveraged to strengthen peer mentoring and course-based communities, thereby channeling digital engagement toward positive academic and social outcomes (Ellison et al., 2007; Yang, 2016). Furthermore, offering just-in-time supports—such as counseling services, workshops, or targeted interventions—during peak academic stress periods can serve as a buffer against vulnerability, regardless of students' overall usage intensity. For policy. The evidence suggests that blanket restrictions or one-size-fits-all screen-time thresholds may be misguided. Instead, policies should focus on the quality and purpose of use rather than sheer quantity. This approach aligns with recent findings indicating that average effects of digital media use on well-being are small and highly heterogeneous across populations (Orben & Przybylski, 2019; Valkenburg et al., 2022). Therefore, nuanced, context-sensitive policies will be more effective in promoting student well-being than rigid universal limits.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to (i) describe the distribution of social media usage intensity and psychological well-being (PWB) among FKIP 2021 students at Universitas Sanata Dharma and (ii) test whether overall intensity is associated with PWB. The findings show that usage intensity is predominantly high to very high (73.7% combined), while PWB is likewise favorable (66.2% in the high/very-high bands); statistically, intensity and PWB are linked by a small, negative association (Spearman's $\rho = -0.134$, $p = .026$), indicating that heavier use is modestly related to lower PWB, though the practical magnitude is limited and substantial overlap exists between high intensity and high PWB. The research contributes by providing cohort-specific, Indonesian evidence that calibrates expectations about effect size; by operationalizing intensity as a multifaceted construct (attention, immersion, duration, frequency) paired with a theoretically grounded, eudaimonic outcome (Ryff's PWB), thus improving conceptual precision over time-only metrics and symptom proxies; and by translating results into actionable guidance for digital-wellbeing practice and policy in teacher-education contexts—namely, prioritizing quality and purpose of engagement (active, goal-directed, socially supportive) over blanket time restrictions, and motivating future work to disaggregate active versus passive use, leverage longitudinal/within-person designs, and integrate objective usage logs to clarify who benefits or is harmed, and under what conditions.

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