

# The Influence of Social Media on Career Choices in High School

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## ABSTRACT

Social media has become one of the main sources of information for students in learning about education and careers. This study aims to determine the effect of social media use on the career choices of 11th grade students at Sultan Agung 01 Islamic High School in Semarang. This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The sample consisted of 152 students selected through simple random sampling. The instruments used were a social media usage scale and a career choice scale. Data analysis used a simple linear regression test with the help of SPSS version 22. The results showed a significant negative influence between social media usage and students' career choices, with a correlation coefficient of -0.465 and a significance of 0.000. The regression equation obtained,  $Y = 175.743 - 1.016X$ , shows that an increase in social media use is associated with a decrease in the accuracy of career choice, which is likely influenced by the dominance of non-educational content. These findings indicate that the higher the use of social media, the lower the accuracy of students' career choices. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen digital literacy and the role of guidance and counseling services by integrating social media as a means of targeted and educational career guidance, rather than limiting its use.

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## Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technology has brought about major changes in various aspects of life, including education and student career choices. One of the most relevant technological advances in students' lives is social media, such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, which are now not only a means of entertainment but also serve as a communication tool and source of information. Many students use social media to

find references about college majors, student experiences, and various career options. Social media facilitates students in gaining career inspiration, building a professional image, and establishing social connections with relevant communities, as well as serving as a provider of career information and new professional trends (Hanapi et al., 2022). This condition shows that social media plays an important role in shaping students' views of their future.

Based on data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2022), more than 90% of high school students in Indonesia use social media every day, making it one of the main sources of information related to education and careers. The high intensity of use makes social media one of the main sources of information for students in learning about the world of careers and education. Social media has a dual role in influencing the career choices of students in Asia-America, namely providing positive impacts in the form of inspiration, community connections, and exposure to various career opportunities, as well as negative impacts in the form of unrealistic portrayals (Zhu, 2025). Students use social media to shape their professional identity, expand their career network, and prepare themselves to enter the workforce through platforms such as Instagram and LinkedIn (Anwar et al., 2025). Although access to information through social media is becoming easier, challenges remain regarding the accuracy and relevance of the content consumed by students in the process of making responsible career decisions.

Social media is an online platform that allows users to create and share content, shape their professional identity, expand their network, and develop their career (Kaplan et al., 2010). In its development, social media is also used as a source of educational and employment information, such as campus promotions, college experiences, and professional lifestyles. Social media can boost teenagers' confidence in career decision-making by providing a space for exploration, access to information, and social connections (Jian et al., 2025). Inspirational content from students or professionals on Instagram and TikTok can also motivate students to continue their education. However, excessive exposure to career-related content on social media can cause confusion, unrealistic expectations, and anxiety in the career decision-making process for students (Khan, 2021).

Several previous studies have proven the correlation between social media use and students' career choices. Social media content that contains information and education can facilitate students in understanding the various characteristics of study programs in higher education, so that they can determine the choice of major that suits their interests and career plans (Elsie et al., 2024). Excessive exposure to unvalidated information on social media can

lead to misperceptions about the world of work, such as idealization of professions or unrealistic portrayals of college life (Maulidya et al., 2022). This shows that social media can have both positive and negative impacts, one of which is on students' career choices.

Career selection is a conscious and planned process based on an understanding of students' interests, talents, and personal circumstances. This process involves careful consideration of interests, values, and opportunities so that students can achieve satisfaction and optimal career development (Super, 1980). However, in reality, many high school students still experience confusion in determining their career choices because they are influenced by trends and viral content on social media that do not always reflect the reality of the world of work (Yates, 2025). Although a number of previous studies have shown that social media plays a positive role in providing career information and inspiration, the results of this study actually show a significant negative influence on the accuracy of students' career choices. This difference in findings indicates a gap between the abundance of career information available on social media and students' digital literacy skills in critically assessing and utilizing this information. Therefore, the influence of social media on career choices needs to be studied more deeply, as choosing a career is a process that should be done consciously and deliberately based on an understanding of one's interests, talents, and personal circumstances.

Another factor that is no less important is students' digital literacy in filtering and understanding career choice information from social media. Digital literacy skills enable students to find, understand, and utilize information effectively in recognizing various career options and making the right decisions (Jalleh et al., 2021). Therefore, digital literacy education needs to be strengthened in schools, particularly through guidance and counseling services. With good digital literacy, students are expected to be able to assess and utilize information from social media related to career choices wisely.

The use of social media among students at Sultan Agung Islamic High School in Semarang is relatively high, but research specifically discussing its influence on career choices is still limited. Understanding these factors is necessary to support career guidance services that are tailored to students' needs. Therefore, research is needed to determine the extent to which social media plays a role in this process. This research will also enrich the literature in the field of guidance and counseling in the digital age. In addition, this research provides a real picture of how students interact with social media in the context of future planning.

## **Method**

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design model referring to Creswell (2010), where correlational design is used to identify and analyze the relationship between two or more variables through numerical data without directly treating the subjects. The research process was carried out systematically, starting from problem identification and hypothesis formulation, determination of research design and variables, selection of representative samples, data collection using valid and reliable instruments, and statistical analysis to test the relationship between variables and draw conclusions relevant to the theory. The research population consisted of all 250 students in grade XI at SMA Islam Sultan Agung 01 Semarang, with the research subjects being grade XI students selected as respondents. The sampling technique used simple random sampling based on the Krejcie and Morgan table at a 5% error rate, resulting in 152 students as the research sample. The data collection instruments used a social media usage scale and a career choice scale, which were compiled in a Likert scale format based on theoretical indicators in accordance with the research variables. Data analysis was conducted through regression testing to determine the effect of independent variables on dependent variables, with the entire process of processing and statistical testing carried out using the SPSS version 22 program.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Results*

The results of this study were compiled to describe the relationship between social media use and career choice among high school students. Several stages of analysis were conducted to ensure data validity and to determine the magnitude of the influence of independent variables on dependent variables. These stages included normality testing, linearity testing, correlation, and regression analysis. A complete explanation of each test is presented in the following section.

The normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method showed a significance value of 0.200, which is greater than 0.05. This result indicates that the data used is normally distributed, so it can be said that the regression model meets the assumption of normality. Thus, the data is suitable for further analysis using a simple linear regression test because the data distribution does not show any significant differences from the normal distribution.

**Table 1. Table of normality test results using SPSS**

<b>One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test</b>	
Statistics	Value
N	152
Mean	0.000
Std. Deviation	4.717
Test Statistic	0.043
Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed)	0.200

Based on the normality test, the social media and career choice variables are normally distributed (significance > 0.05), while the linearity test shows that the relationship between the two variables is linear with a Deviation from Linearity value of 0.154, thus fulfilling the assumptions for correlation or regression analysis. This means that the relationship between the influence of social media and students' career choices is unidirectional and can be further analyzed using a simple linear regression test. The Linearity significance value of 0.154 > 0.05 also reinforces that there is no significant deviation from the linear relationship pattern between variables.

**Table 2. Table of linearity test results using SPSS**

Source of Variation	SS	df	RJK	F	Sig.
Linearity	22.011	1	22,011	0.320	0.023
Deviation from Linearity	3540.507	40	88,513	1,286	0.154
In the Group	7,569.798	110	68,816	-	-
Total	11,132.316	151	-	-	-

Results The correlation test results show a coefficient value of  $-0.465$  with a significance of 0.000. This negative coefficient means that the higher the use of social media, the lower the accuracy of students' career choices. This negative relationship may arise because the high exposure to information that is not always accurate on social media can obscure students' understanding of their potential and suitable career paths. Based on Sugiyono's (2019) categories, this correlation value is at a moderate level but remains significant. This finding

indicates that social media use has a real contribution to how students form preferences and tendencies in career choice.

**Table 3. Table of correlation test results using SPSS**

<b>Correlations</b>			
Variable	Career Choice	Social Media	N
Career Choice	1	-0.465**	152
Social Media	-0.465**	1	152

**The regression equation obtained is:**

$$Y = 175.743 - 1.016X$$

The regression equation  $Y = 175.743 - 1.016X$  The results show that every one-unit increase in social media usage score is associated with a 1.016-point decrease in career choice accuracy score. This indicates that variable X (social media usage) has an opposite effect on variable Y (career choice accuracy). This negative coefficient clearly illustrates that the higher the intensity of social media use, the lower the accuracy of students' career decisions. The magnitude of the coefficient, which is  $-1.016$ , indicates a negative influence that is practically strong, emphasizing the significant impact of social media use habits on career choice accuracy. In addition, the t-test result of  $-18.623$  with a significance level of  $0.000$  confirms that this effect is statistically significant at the 5% level. Thus, it can be concluded that social media use contributes significantly and negatively to the accuracy of students' career choices, making it important for guidance counselors to.

**Table 4. Table of regression test results using SPSS**

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	175.743	4,829	-	36,397	0.000
Social Media	-1,016	0.055	-0.836	-18,623	0.000

*Discussion*

The results of this study indicate that social media use has a significant negative effect on students' career choices. These findings suggest that the more intensely students use social media, the less accurate they are in determining their career choices. This is in line with the

findings (Zakariya et al., 2025) which explain that social media is often a source of unverified information and can interfere with the rational career decision-making process. During adolescence, the identity exploration phase makes students susceptible to the influence of visual content that is attractive but does not reflect the reality of a career (Christ et al., 2024).

This negative influence also suggests that social media has not been fully utilized as a constructive career education tool. Much of the career content presented by public figures and influencers only highlights the positive aspects and glamorous image of a profession. The lack of explanation regarding the competencies, challenges, and qualifications required causes students to form career perceptions based on visual appearances and popular trends. This condition is in line with the findings (Nurjuman et al., 2023) which show that the dominance of idealistic content can hinder students' self-reflection and lead to less realistic career choices.

These research findings are in line with the results of a study (Halim, 2024) which shows that social media plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between personality and career preferences among Generation Z. Social media not only functions as a provider of information, but also shapes the way students interpret and understand career choices through patterns of interaction and exposure to the content they consume. Furthermore, (Jalal, 2024) emphasizes that the rapid flow of information in the digital era is not always balanced with adequate quality and validity of information, thus potentially reducing students' career maturity if their digital literacy skills are still low. This condition is reinforced by the findings of (Noviyanti, 2020), which explain that the dominance of visual features on Instagram, such as photos, videos, captions, stories, and live broadcasts, can shape students' perceptions of a profession unconsciously. As a result, students tend to judge professions based on the images displayed on social media, rather than on a comprehensive understanding of the tasks, challenges, and competencies that are actually required.

However, the results of this study need to be interpreted with consideration of several limitations. The measurement of social media usage intensity was not accompanied by mapping of the types of content accessed by students. In fact, according to Super (1980), a mature career selection process requires in-depth exploration of the individual and the world of work. Without an analysis of the characteristics of the content consumed, it is difficult to determine whether students are more exposed to informative content or idealistic content that has the potential to blur their career perceptions. In addition, the use of self-perception-based instruments also has the potential to cause subjective bias, given that the influence of

social media often works indirectly through visual exposure and social learning mechanisms. This is in line with the view (Ginting et al., 2024) which emphasizes that the process of social modeling and learning experiences from the environment play an important role in shaping individual beliefs and career decisions.

This study also did not involve other variables known to have a significant influence on career choice, such as interests, personal values, personality, and family and school support. (Spokane et al., 2002) emphasized that compatibility between personality and work environment is a major part of the effective career choice process. Similarly, (Wang et al., 2024) explain that career choices are formed through individuals' narrative interpretations of their life experiences. The absence of analysis of these variables means that the picture of the relationship between social media and career choice in this study is not yet fully comprehensive.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study still make an important contribution, particularly in the context of education and counseling. Social media is not inherently negative, but the quality of information and students' ability to sort content play a major role in shaping their career choices. Research (Khoirunnisa et al., 2023) shows that social media, when used strategically by educational institutions to convey credible and relevant information, can help students find the data and considerations necessary in choosing their educational path or program, so that students' preferences and interactions with institutional social media significantly contribute to their interest in making more accurate and informed educational decisions. Therefore, digital literacy and guidance from guidance counselors are crucial aspects to ensure students can utilize social media positively in the career selection process.

## **Conclusion**

This study confirms that the use of social media has a significant and negative impact on students' career choices. The higher the intensity of social media use, the lower the accuracy of students in determining their career choices. This condition shows that social media does not yet function optimally as an educational information source, because the high intensity of social media use among students is not balanced with adequate digital literacy skills in evaluating career information in accordance with their interests and abilities. These findings are in line with career development theory, which emphasizes the importance of self-understanding, and are supported by various previous studies that reveal that exposure to

uncontrolled content tends to reduce the quality of decision-making. The consistency of the findings of this study with the current literature shows that the high frequency of social media use, which is not balanced with adequate digital literacy, is a major factor in the decline in the accuracy of students' career choices. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of strengthening digital literacy and career guidance services by guidance and counseling teachers through the implementation of targeted guidance, such as equipping students with the skills to critically assess career content on social media, utilizing credible online career information sources in guidance and counseling services, and facilitating career reflection so that students are able to realistically adjust the information obtained to their interests, talents, and abilities.

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