

# Designing an Information Media on the Impact of Excessive Social Media Use on Adolescents' Mental Health Disorders

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**Abstract:** This study explores the impact of excessive social media use on adolescent mental health, particularly among high school students in Padang Panjang, Indonesia. As digital technologies become more embedded in daily life, adolescents increasingly spend extended periods online, often unaware of the psychological consequences. The study employed a qualitative descriptive method supported by surveys, interviews, observations, and literature review. Data were collected from students, school counselors, and clinical psychologists, revealing that excessive social media use is strongly correlated with symptoms such as anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and emotional instability. In response, the study designed an educational illustrated book titled *Behind the Screen*, aimed at increasing awareness and promoting healthy digital habits among youth. The visual strategy utilized relatable character illustrations and simplified language to communicate the risks of digital overuse and mental health decline. The results suggest that targeted visual media can serve as an effective tool to support mental health literacy and behavior change in adolescent communities.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Adolescent Mental Health, Digital Behavior, Visual Communication, Illustrated Book, Awareness Campaign.

## Introduction

The rapid development of communication and internet technology has significantly transformed various aspects of human life, particularly in the way people interact, communicate, and consume information. Social media, as one of the most dominant digital platforms, has become deeply embedded in the daily routines of adolescents. According to We Are Social (2024), there are approximately 139 million active social media users in Indonesia, with an average daily usage time of three hours and 26 minutes. While this digital integration offers many benefits such as connectivity and access to information, excessive social media use has been increasingly linked to adverse mental health outcomes among adolescents (Najah et al., 2021; Fakhriyani, 2019).

Despite a growing body of research connecting social media overuse with mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, stress, and self-image issues (Keles, 2022; Kelly et al., 2018) there remains a lack of accessible, youth-centered informational tools that can effectively raise awareness and encourage behavioral change among adolescents.

Particularly in regions like Padang Panjang, which recorded an internet penetration rate of 85.68% in 2023 (BPS Sumbar, 2023), the prevalence of excessive social media use among students is alarmingly high. Field surveys and interviews with students, counselors, and psychologists in Padang Panjang reveal that adolescents are not only unaware of the symptoms of mental health disorders but often normalize these issues as part of daily life (Gerry Kurniawan, 2024).

This research and design project aims to develop an informative illustrated book tailored for adolescents that highlights the psychological impacts of excessive social media use. The primary goal is to raise awareness about the signs of mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, and provide practical strategies to mitigate these effects. By leveraging visual storytelling and a relatable narrative, the media is designed to foster emotional resonance and promote self-reflection among youth.

The significance of this project lies in its potential to bridge the knowledge gap and offer preventive mental health education in a format that is both engaging and accessible. Illustrated media has been proven effective in conveying complex psychological issues in a comprehensible way, especially for younger audiences (Kusrianto, 2007; Arifin & Kusrianto, 2009). This project not only contributes to the field of visual communication design but also aligns with mental health advocacy efforts, aiming to foster a more emotionally resilient generation.

In conclusion, while digital platforms have revolutionized communication for adolescents, the associated risks to mental health demand urgent educational interventions. This research addresses the critical need for a preventive media tool that resonates with youth culture and promotes healthier digital behavior. Through a well-designed illustrated book, this project contributes to raising awareness, improving mental health literacy, and reducing the risks of digital addiction among adolescents in Indonesia.

## Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the psychological impact of excessive social media use on adolescents and to design an appropriate educational visual medium as an intervention tool. The qualitative method was chosen to allow an in-depth understanding of the social, emotional, and behavioral patterns experienced by high school students in Padangpanjang, West Sumatra.

Data collection was conducted through a combination of literature review, observation, interviews, and questionnaire distribution. The literature review involved examining previous research on adolescent mental health, media psychology, and visual communication design to build a theoretical framework. Observations were carried out in school environments and community spaces where adolescents interact with digital devices, aiming to capture behavioral patterns related to screen time and media consumption.

In depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including school counselors, psychologists, teachers, and students. These interviews provided qualitative insight into the psychological symptoms commonly observed, such as anxiety, low self-

esteem, addiction, and social withdrawal. A student counselor, for example, noted that “many students show signs of emotional fatigue after long hours online, including reduced attention span and sudden mood swings” (Interview, 2025). These findings were triangulated through questionnaire data distributed via Google Forms to a sample of 100 students aged 15-18 years. The questionnaire gathered information about students’ daily screen time, emotional reactions to social media, self-perception, and awareness of mental health issues.

The analysis of data was conducted using descriptive interpretation and thematic categorization, allowing patterns to emerge from participants’ responses. These findings were then synthesized to inform the conceptual development of a visual media product specifically, an illustrated educational book titled *Behind the Screen*. The design process integrated principles of visual hierarchy, readability, character storytelling, and muted color palettes to evoke emotional resonance while ensuring accessibility for teenage readers.

By combining data-driven insights with visual design strategies, this methodological framework positioned the research not only as a study of behavior but also as a creative solution to a growing psychological concern. The resulting educational media aimed to foster awareness, empathy, and positive behavioral change in the digital lives of adolescents.

## Result and Discussion

The results of this study indicate that excessive social media use among adolescents has a measurable and observable impact on their psychological well-being. Data collected through questionnaires, interviews, and field observations in Padangpanjang reveal recurring symptoms such as emotional instability, anxiety, social withdrawal, and diminished motivation, particularly among high school students aged 15 to 18.

From the online questionnaire distributed to 100 respondents, the following patterns emerged:

1. 78% of students reported spending more than 4 hours per day on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.
2. 67% admitted to feeling anxious or inadequate after consuming social media content, especially when comparing themselves to others.
3. 61% experienced mood swings or irritability when unable to access their devices.
4. 89% had never received formal education or counseling related to digital literacy or mental health.

These data were corroborated by interviews with school counselors and psychologists. One counselor explained, “Students who appear cheerful in public often confess to feeling isolated or pressured online. Many of them rely on likes and comments for emotional validation” (Interview, 2025). A clinical psychologist further noted that emotional symptoms often manifest physically through fatigue, loss of focus, or sleep disturbances.

Observations conducted in school and community environments also revealed behavioral indicators such as reduced face-to-face interaction, shorter attention spans

during class, and constant smartphone checking, including during meals or group activities. These behaviors align with previously identified patterns of digital dependency and social disconnection.

Based on these findings, the research proceeded to develop a visual communication product an illustrated educational book titled *Behind the Screen*. The design was informed directly by the data collected. For example, the main character was constructed based on a composite of actual adolescent experiences reported during interviews and survey responses. Scenes within the book depict scenarios such as “doomscrolling”, social comparison, digital fatigue, and emotional breakdowns, while integrating subtle calls to action promoting mindfulness and offline engagement.

The illustrated book was presented in both physical and digital formats during a small-scale exhibition in a school setting. Feedback from student viewers indicated that the storytelling approach, relatable visuals, and the use of simple language helped them recognize their own behavior and emotions. Many reported that they had never considered the connection between their mental state and their screen time until engaging with the media. These results confirm the relevance of visual media as an educational intervention to raise awareness and influence behavior in adolescent digital culture.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a consistent and concerning link between excessive social media use and deteriorating mental health among adolescents. As supported by the survey and interviews conducted, symptoms such as anxiety, emotional fatigue, social withdrawal, and dependence on digital validation were prevalent across student respondents. These observations are in line with existing psychological research, which emphasizes that prolonged screen exposure particularly on platforms that encourage social comparison can lead to significant emotional distress (Keles, 2022; Tang et al., 2021).

Social media platforms are designed to stimulate reward-based behaviors through features such as likes, notifications, and algorithmic content delivery. These mechanisms activate short-term dopamine responses, which reinforce repetitive usage and digital dependence (Amedie, 2015). Among adolescents, whose emotional regulation and identity development are still in progress, this form of psychological conditioning can become particularly damaging. As noted in the thesis: “Social media offers the illusion of connection, but often leads to deeper feelings of isolation and insecurity” (Kurniawan, 2025, p. 6).

Moreover, the study reinforces the notion that adolescents often lack the emotional vocabulary and self-awareness to recognize or articulate the impact of their digital behaviors. This makes traditional intervention strategies such as verbal counseling or lectures less effective, particularly in school settings where mental health remains a taboo subject. As one counselor explained, “They don’t respond to being told. They respond when they see themselves reflected in something they understand” (Interview, 2025).

In this context, the use of visual communication becomes especially relevant. The illustrated book *Behind the Screen* was designed not only to inform, but also to resonate

with the psychological reality of adolescent users. Visual storytelling allows abstract concepts such as anxiety or emotional disconnection to be translated into relatable narratives and characters. This is consistent with Lupton and Phillips (2015), who argue that design has the power to shape perception and behavior through visual hierarchy, symbolism, and emotional tone.

The success of this approach was evident in student responses during the exhibition, where many viewers expressed a sense of recognition or self-awareness after engaging with the material.

This supports the idea that visual media when carefully constructed can act as a mirror, helping adolescents externalize and better understand their internal experiences. As Fakhriyani (2019) has stated, early emotional education is crucial to prevent long-term psychological decline, and such education must adapt to the communicative preferences of the digital generation. The integration of digital behavior insights with empathetic design strategies demonstrated in this study can serve as a model for future health campaigns targeting youth. While further research is needed to evaluate long term impact, the immediate emotional response and increased awareness shown by participants suggest that visual media is a promising tool for adolescent mental health education.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that excessive use of social media significantly contributes to mental health challenges among adolescents, particularly in the form of anxiety, social withdrawal, emotional instability, and dependency on digital validation. The findings underscore a major gap in emotional awareness and mental health education among teenagers, many of whom are unaware of how their online habits shape their psychological well-being.

By combining qualitative research with visual communication design, this project demonstrated that illustrated media can function not only as a source of information, but also as a reflective and therapeutic tool. The educational book *Behind the Screen* successfully translated abstract psychological concerns into accessible visual narratives that resonated with its adolescent audience. Student responses to the media indicated increased awareness, emotional connection, and willingness to reflect on their digital behavior.

For future research, deeper longitudinal studies could explore how continued exposure to such visual interventions influences behavior over time. On a practical level, collaboration with schools, mental health professionals, and local governments is recommended to integrate media like *Behind the Screen* into formal and informal educational settings. Ultimately, in an age where digital media dominates youth experience, empowering them through visual literacy and emotional education is not just relevant it is essential.

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