

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TEEN HEALTH IN THE DIGITAL ERA HINAI KIRI

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the impact of social media on adolescent health in Hinai Kiri Village by highlighting subjective experiences, behavioral patterns, and the resulting social consequences. The research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, involving adolescents aged 13–18 years as primary informants, as well as teachers, parents, and community leaders as supporting informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, and were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to the effects of social media on adolescent health. The findings indicate that intensive use of social media, particularly platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, has a significant impact on mental health, manifested in social anxiety, sleep disturbances, and low self-esteem due to social comparison. In terms of physical health, symptoms such as eye strain, neck pain, and sedentary lifestyles were identified as consequences of excessive gadget use. Meanwhile, in the social dimension, there has been a shift from direct face-to-face interaction to shallow virtual communication, which reduces adolescents' ability to empathize and engage in meaningful interpersonal interactions.

Keywords: Adolescents; Digital Era; Mental Health; Social Media.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh media sosial terhadap kesehatan remaja di Desa Hinai Kiri dengan menyoroti pengalaman subjektif, perilaku, serta konsekuensi sosial yang ditimbulkan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus, melibatkan remaja berusia 13–18 tahun sebagai informan utama, serta guru, orang tua, dan tokoh masyarakat sebagai informan pendukung. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola dan tema terkait dampak media sosial terhadap kesehatan remaja. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan media sosial yang intensif, terutama pada platform seperti TikTok dan Instagram, berdampak signifikan pada aspek kesehatan mental berupa kecemasan sosial, gangguan tidur, dan rendah diri akibat perbandingan sosial. Pada aspek fisik, ditemukan gejala seperti kelelahan mata, nyeri leher, dan pola hidup sedentari akibat penggunaan gawai yang berlebihan. Sementara pada aspek sosial, terjadi pergeseran interaksi langsung menjadi komunikasi virtual yang dangkal, menurunkan kemampuan remaja dalam berempati dan berinteraksi secara tatap muka.

Kata Kunci: Era Digital; Media Sosial; Kesehatan Mental; Remaja.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has changed patterns of social interaction, especially among teenagers (Sudrajat, 2020). Social media has become one of the most dominant digital platforms used for communication, self-expression, and obtaining information (Przybylski & Murayama, 2023). This phenomenon is also seen in rural areas such as Hinai Kiri Village, Secanggang District, where access to the internet and the use of social media have increased significantly in recent years. Teenagers, as an age group in the phase of identity-seeking, are very vulnerable to the influences of the digital environment, both positive and negative (Septa & Ramadhan, 2025).

Although social media offers various benefits such as expanding social networks, building self-confidence through social recognition, and serving as a source of entertainment, uncontrolled use can pose risks to adolescents' mental and physical health (Oktavia, Jumaini, & Agrina, 2021). Some symptoms that start to appear include social anxiety, sleep disturbances, decreased face-to-face interaction, and psychological stress due to social comparison and cyberbullying (Keles & Grealish, 2020). This condition becomes increasingly complex in rural areas, where parental control over children's online activities is still relatively limited and digital literacy is not yet evenly distributed.

Adolescents are an age group that is undergoing an important transition in psychological, social, and emotional aspects (Twenge & Campbell, 2023). In the digital era, this development process is inseparable from the influence of social media, which has become an integral part of daily life (Darma, 2023). Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have changed the way teenagers communicate, build their identities, and obtain information (Aristian, 2023). However, intensive exposure to social media also raises various new issues, particularly related to mental health and social well-being. Adolescent health is an important aspect of developing quality human resources. Adolescence, which is in the age range of 10–19 years according to the WHO, is marked by complex physical, psychological, and social changes (Septiana N. Z., 2021). This period

becomes crucial because various lifestyle habits formed during this time will affect long-term health. The health challenges often faced by adolescents include mental health issues, risky sexual behavior, substance abuse, malnutrition, as well as the negative influence of social media on self-image and psychological well-being (Mulawarman & Nurfitri, 2022). Promotive and preventive efforts are key in maintaining adolescent health, through comprehensive health education, family and school support, as well as access to youth-friendly health services (Nabilah, 2023). Attention to adolescent health is not only important for individual well-being but also determines the direction of societal development as a whole.

In the Hinai Kiri area of Langkat Regency, social media penetration is increasingly widespread along with the growing access to digital devices and internet networks. Although this digital transformation opens up opportunities for teenagers to gain information and develop their potential, the reality on the ground shows a dark side of excessive and uncontrolled social media use. Symptoms such as anxiety, sleep disturbances, decreased physical activity, and psychological pressure from social comparisons are beginning to appear among teenagers. Many of them also experience a decline in the quality of direct social interactions in their surrounding environment.

This issue is exacerbated by the still low digital literacy among teenagers and the lack of parental supervision over their online activities. On one hand, social media serves as a means of self-expression and entertainment, but on the other hand, it creates significant emotional and social pressure. Many teenagers feel compelled to always appear perfect, follow viral trends, or seek validation through “likes” and comments. As a result, a psychological dependency arises that can disrupt teenagers' mental health and life balance.

As digital technology develops, social media has become an integral part of teenagers' lives and plays a significant role in shaping their self-identity, social relationships, and psychological well-being. Various previous studies have revealed the impact of social media on adolescent mental health, especially in urban contexts and developed countries. Research by (Coyne & Rogers, 2020) reveals that

intensive use of social media is associated with an increased risk of depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders in adolescents. The same goes for the study by (Andreassen, Torsheim, & Brunborg, 2022) which indicates a correlation between the duration of social media use and a decline in the psychological well-being of teenagers in the United States.

However, there is a research gap in the local and cultural context in Indonesia, particularly in rural areas such as Hinai Kiri, Secanggang District. Most studies on social media and adolescents in Indonesia still focus on urban areas with the assumption of equal digital access (Appel & Gerlach, 2021). In fact, the social dynamics and patterns of social media use in rural areas have their own characteristics, including in terms of family supervision, access to technology, as well as cultural values that influence adolescent behavior. In addition, quantitative approaches still dominate previous studies, so the subjective experiences and the meanings adolescents attach to their social media use are not fully captured.

Based on this gap, this study presents novelty from two perspectives. First, in terms of local context: this research focuses on rural areas that are rarely studied in depth regarding youth digitalization, namely Hinai Kiri in Langkat Regency. Second, in terms of methodological approach: this study employs a qualitative case study approach to deeply explore adolescents' experiences with social media and its impact on their physical, mental, and social health. This novelty is expected to provide a more contextual and relevant scientific contribution to the dynamics of Indonesian youth in the digital era, as well as enrich the local literature in the fields of developmental psychology, public health, and digital sociology.

Thus, this study not only fills a gap in the literature, which has mostly been general or urban-centric, but also offers a local perspective that emphasizes the socio-cultural realities of adolescents in increasingly digitalized rural areas. This study aims to analyze the impact of social media on the health of Hinai Kiri adolescents in the Secanggang District. By understanding how social media affects the mental, physical, and social health of adolescents in this area, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a basis for community-based interventions and

policies that are more responsive to the health challenges faced by adolescents in the social media era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type, aimed at deeply exploring the experiences and impacts of social media use on adolescent health in Hinai Kiri Village, Secanggang District. A qualitative approach was chosen because it can reveal the meaning, subjective experiences, and complex social dynamics in the context of adolescents' daily lives (Creswell, 2020). Case studies are chosen because they allow researchers to deeply understand phenomena within a specific, real, and actual context.

The research subjects were teenagers aged 13 to 18 who actively use social media, whether intensively or moderately. The selection of subjects was done purposively, by choosing individuals who were deemed to have relevant information related to the focus of the research (Sugiyono, 2022). In addition to teenagers, this study also involved supporting informants such as parents, teachers, and community figures who play a role in social supervision and understanding adolescent development in the local environment.

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured guide so that informants could freely express their views while still focusing on the research topic. Observations were conducted in homes, schools, and youth gathering places to understand their interaction patterns and behavioral changes. Meanwhile, documentation included secondary data from schools, health centers, as well as screenshots of social media activities that informants were willing to share.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, by identifying recurring themes from the informants' narratives and observation results, and then categorizing them according to health aspects such as mental, social, and physical (Moleong, 2000). The analysis was conducted in stages through

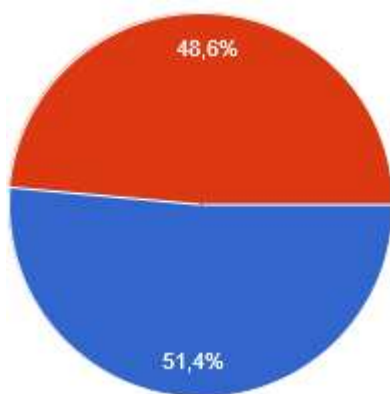
the processes of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

To maintain data validity, this study uses method and source triangulation, namely by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as from various informants to ensure the consistency of information (Miles & Saldaña, 2014). In addition, the researchers also conducted member checking by asking informants for confirmation to validate the findings that had been compiled. Through this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media shapes and influences aspects of adolescent health in the local context, especially amid the rapid flow of digitalization reaching even rural areas such as Hinai Kiri.

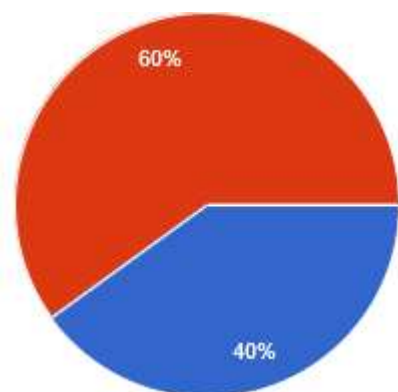
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Social media has now become an inseparable part of teenagers' lives, where platforms like TikTok and Instagram are the most dominantly used by teenagers in Hinai Kiri, Secanggang District. Based on data obtained through Google Form, 42.9% of respondents use social media for more than 6 hours each day, mainly for entertainment (40%) and communication (37.1%). The findings based on the image below are as follows.



Respondent's Gender



Respondent Age

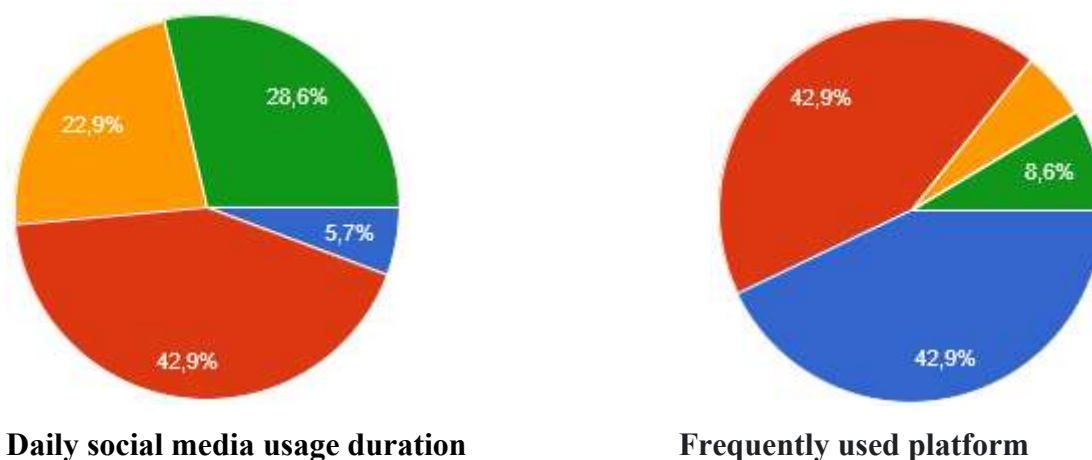


Figure 1. Diagram of Respondent Characteristics Based on Gender, Age, Daily Social Media Usage Duration, and Frequently Used Platforms

Based on Figure 1, it can be seen that the majority of research respondents are male (51.4%), while females account for 48.6%. In terms of age, respondents are dominated by teenagers aged 19–23 years (60%), indicating that this age group is an active social media user in Hinai Kiri Village, Secanggang District. The daily social media usage duration shows a fairly high intensity. As many as 42.9% of respondents use social media for more than 6 hours each day, while the rest use it for 3–6 hours per day. This data indicates that social media has become an important part of teenagers' routines in the area.

In terms of the platforms used, TikTok and Facebook occupy the top positions as the most frequently accessed social media, both with the same percentage of 42.9%. Meanwhile, platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram are only used by a small portion of respondents. These findings indicate that teenagers in Hinai Kiri tend to prefer visual-based, entertainment, and quick interaction platforms, such as TikTok, which is popular for short video content, and Facebook, which provides a space for community communication.

Nevertheless, excessive use of social media has several impacts on the health of teenagers. According to survey results, 14.3% of respondents often feel lonely despite being active on social media, while another 42.9% experience it occasionally. In addition, 20% of respondents admitted that their mood is often

influenced by activities on social media.

Negative impacts are also evident in the aspect of physical health. As many as 42.9% of respondents sometimes experience neck or back pain due to poor ergonomic sitting positions while using gadgets, and 20% often experience eye fatigue. Furthermore, 22.9% of respondents stated that they often ignore meal times and rarely exercise because too much time is spent on social media. These findings illustrate that teenagers in Hinai Kiri Village have a high level of digital activity, yet still face challenges in maintaining a balance between social media use and their physical and mental health.

The Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Health in Terms of Mental Health

Based on field observations, it was seen that most teenagers in Hinai Kiri Village use social media with high intensity, averaging between 4 to 6 hours per day. This activity is mostly done during free time, especially in the evening after school or work. The most frequently used platforms are TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram, which are generally used for watching entertainment videos, sharing stories, and interacting with peers.

During the observation activities, it was evident that some teenagers showed signs of mental fatigue such as difficulty concentrating, easily feeling bored, and quickly becoming irritable when unable to access social media. Some of them also appeared to isolate themselves and spent more time looking down at their phones when in public places or when gathering with peers. In both home and school learning activities, several teenagers seemed less focused because they frequently paid attention to social media notifications. Some teenagers were seen experiencing rapid mood changes, especially after receiving negative comments or seeing posts showcasing other people's lifestyles.

Observations also indicate a decrease in the interest in interacting directly with the surrounding environment. Some teenagers prefer communicating through online messages rather than face-to-face conversations. In addition, some teenagers appear to experience sleep disturbances due to the habit of using

social media late at night. The observations show that excessive social media use among teenagers in Hinai Kiri Village tends to be associated with mood changes, decreased concentration, and an increased tendency to withdraw from social environments, which are early indicators of potential mental health issues. The observation results are also consistent with the findings from interviews. The interview results are as follows. Informant 1 (Male teenager, 18 years old):

“I check social media almost every day, sometimes for up to six hours. If I don't go on it for a day, it feels like I'm missing out on a lot. Sometimes I also feel insecure when I see friends posting about vacations or new stuff.”

Informant 2 (Female adolescent, 19 years old):

“I often open TikTok before going to bed, sometimes staying up late. If my posts don't get many likes, it feels like I'm not appreciated. But if a lot of people comment, I feel really happy.”

Informant 3 (Parent of a teenager, 45 years old):

“My child now spends more time in their room on their phone. Sometimes they don't respond immediately when called. They used to like helping out around the house, but now very rarely. I feel like they are becoming more withdrawn.”

Informant 4 (Guidance Counselor at a local high school):

“Some students seem to be less focused in class. During lessons, some often daydream or secretly peek at their phones. I once asked, and they said they stayed up late because of social media.”

Informant 5 (Community figure, 52 years old):

“I've noticed that young people these days spend more time quietly on their phones. When there's a community service event or a religious gathering, many don't participate. It seems like they're busier playing on social media than socializing in their neighborhood.”

The Impact of Social Media on Adolescents' Physical Health

Based on field observations, it was found that excessive use of social media has had a tangible impact on the physical condition of some teenagers in Hinai Kiri Village, Secanggang District. High social media use, especially on platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram, is generally carried out for long durations, ranging from 4 to 6 hours per day, and even more during free time.

During the observation activities, it was seen that many teenagers use gadgets while sitting in a slouched position for long periods, both at home, in internet cafes, and in places where they gather. This condition causes some of them to complain of neck pain, back pain, as well as soreness in their wrists and shoulders. Some teenagers were also seen frequently rubbing their eyes or closing their eyes due to visual fatigue after staring at their phone screens for a long time.

In addition, observations showed that some teenagers experience changes in their sleep and eating patterns due to spending too much time interacting with social media. Many of them stay up late at night watching videos or communicating online, so in the morning they appear sleepy and unenthusiastic during activities. This habit also affects their stamina and concentration at school.

Observations in several homes indicate that teenagers spend more time sitting in their rooms or on the porch while using their phones, rather than engaging in physical activities such as playing, exercising, or helping with household chores. As a result, their physical activity significantly decreases, which could potentially lead to weight gain and reduced physical fitness. Furthermore, it was also found that some teenagers often skip meals because they are too absorbed in using social media. They prefer to postpone eating to watch videos or play online games. This habit affects the regularity of their eating patterns and causes an imbalance in their body energy.

Overall, the observation results indicate that high social media usage among teenagers in Hinai Kiri Village has a negative impact on physical aspects,

particularly on eye health, body posture, sleep patterns, eating habits, and daily physical activities. This condition illustrates that social media, although serving entertainment and communication functions, also has the potential to reduce physical health quality if not used wisely and proportionally. The observation results are also in line with the findings from the interviews. The interview findings are presented below. Informant 1 (Male teenager, 17 years old):

“I usually use social media almost every day, sometimes for more than five hours. Usually while lying down or sitting for a long time in a chair. Sometimes my neck and back hurt, but I keep going because it's fun watching videos on TikTok.”

Informant 2 (Female adolescent, 18 years old):

“I often play on my phone until late at night. My eyes sometimes feel sore and watery from staring at the screen for too long. Sometimes I even forget to have dinner and only realize it when it's already late. But if I don't check social media, I feel really bored.”

Informant 3 (Parent of a teenager, 43 years old):

“My child often stays up late because of playing on their phone. In the morning, it's hard to wake them up, and sometimes they skip breakfast because they're still sleepy. I've also noticed that their body gets tired more quickly now and they rarely exercise.”

Informant 4 (Physical Education Teacher at a local high school):

“Nowadays, many students are not very active during physical education classes. Some complain about getting tired easily and having low stamina. When I asked, they said they often stay up late because of social media. Their lifestyle has indeed changed.”

Informant 5 (Village health worker, 38 years old):

“From our observations, many teenagers come complaining of tired eyes or neck aches. They usually admit to spending too much time on their phones. Some have even gained weight due to lack of exercise and irregular eating habits.”

The Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Health from the Perspective of Adolescent Social Life

Based on field observations conducted by the researcher in Hinai Kiri Village, Secanggang District, it was observed that social media usage has a significant influence on the social interaction patterns of teenagers in the surrounding environment. Most teenagers spend more time with gadgets (smartphones) than engaging in face-to-face interactions with family, peers, or the local community.

During observations at several locations such as coffee shops, fields, and school environments, it was apparent that teenagers tended to gather while playing on their phones without talking much to each other. Direct social interaction seemed to decrease, replaced by online communication through platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok. This phenomenon indicates a shift in social relationship patterns, from real communication to virtual communication.

Researchers also observed that teenagers are becoming less active in social and religious activities in the village. Several activities such as community work, youth religious study groups, and group sports are no longer regularly attended. Many of them prefer to stay at home to use social media or watch entertainment content. This indicates a decline in social participation among teenagers due to excessive use of social media.

In addition, in everyday interactions, some teenagers appear less responsive and unfocused when spoken to by friends or family members. They tend to be preoccupied with notifications and incoming messages on their phones, leading to a decline in the quality of interpersonal communication. In a social context, this behavior can create the impression of being indifferent to the surrounding environment and reduce social sensitivity toward others.

Observations also indicate changes in social behavior patterns. Some teenagers appear more confident on social media compared to real-life interactions. They are more active in commenting, sharing photos, or writing

statuses, but in direct interactions, they appear shy and reserved. This condition suggests that social media creates an illusory space for expression, where teenagers' social identities are more shaped by their digital image than by real social relationships.

Overall, the observation results indicate that intensive use of social media has affected the social health of adolescents in Hinai Kiri Village. Communication and social interaction patterns tend to decline, participation in community activities decreases, and there is a tendency toward social isolation and dependence on virtual interaction. These findings suggest the need to strengthen the role of family, school, and community in balancing online and face-to-face interactions to maintain adolescents' social health. The observation results also align with the findings from the interviews. The interview findings are presented below. Informant 1 (Male teenager, 18 years old):

“Now when we hang out with friends, everyone is on their phones. Sometimes we chat for a bit, then get busy scrolling through TikTok or Instagram. If we don't check social media, it feels lonely. So we end up chatting more than talking face-to-face.”

Informant 2 (Female adolescent, 17 years old):

“I feel more comfortable communicating through chat. When meeting in person, sometimes I get confused about what to say. On social media, you can be more free, edit photos, write captions, or comment on friends' posts.”

Informant 3 (Parent of a teenager, 47 years old):

“Kids these days are different from before. They rarely go outside, rarely talk to neighbors. Sometimes if there's an event in the neighborhood, only a few show up because they prefer playing on their phones at home.”

Informant 4 (Teacher at a local high school):

“Many students nowadays are more individualistic. When it comes to group work, they prefer discussing through group chats rather than meeting in person. Sometimes, when asked to present, some appear nervous because they are not

used to speaking in front of others.”

Informant 5 (Community leader, 55 years old):

“In the past, teenagers here were active in activities like community service, soccer tournaments, or religious study gatherings. Now, it seems fewer people are participating. They are more occupied with the virtual world, so social relationships among young residents are starting to weaken.”

Discussion

In terms of mental health, the finding that teenagers experience anxiety, sleep disorders, and low self-esteem due to social media exposure has been confirmed by various studies. (Septiana N. , 2021) A systematic review of social media and mental health states that the intensity of social media use is significantly associated with increased symptoms of depression and anxiety in adolescents. This is supported by research (Nayla, 2024) which shows an increase in sleep disturbances and a decline in psychological well-being as a result of excessive screen time.

The phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) mentioned in the observation has also been widely discussed in the literature. (Tapada & Durandt, 2023) revealing that FOMO is a major predictor of social media addiction and negatively affects sleep quality, interpersonal relationships, and life satisfaction. In the context of Hinai Kiri, teachers and parents witness firsthand how teenagers feel anxious about being left out of digital social trends, causing stress that disrupts the learning process.

In the dimension of physical health, the observation results noting a sedentary lifestyle, postural problems, and eye fatigue are reinforced by findings from (Daud & Sulaehani, 2024) which highlights that more than two hours of screen time each day contributes to decreased physical activity and an increased risk of obesity as well as musculoskeletal disorders. Research from (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2023) also linked the use of digital devices at night with a decline in sleep quality, which was also reported by healthcare workers in Hinai Kiri.

The decline in direct social interaction observed in the field is consistent with the study by (Richards & Caldwell, 2025) which states that the increased use of social media has a negative impact on social skills, empathy, and the ability to resolve conflicts directly. Meanwhile, (Boer, Stevens, & Finkenauer, 2021) explaining that although social media provides a means of self-expression, the quality of interpersonal relationships formed online is often shallow and unstable.

Parents in Hinai Kiri are concerned that their children are spending more time isolating themselves with gadgets, a concern that is also confirmed by research. (Rosen & Lim, 2024) which indicates that uncontrolled use of social media can reduce teenagers' involvement in social and family activities, as well as increase the tendency to withdraw from real social environments.

Based on these overall findings, it can be affirmed that the phenomenon occurring in Hinai Kiri Village reflects a global reality that requires a collective response. The use of social media by teenagers cannot be entirely prohibited, but it must be managed wisely through educational and preventive approaches. Digital literacy education, screen time management training, and strengthening direct social interactions through community activities are concrete steps that need to be encouraged by parents, schools, and the village government. Thus, this research not only depicts local conditions but also makes an important contribution to understanding global challenges in the digital era, particularly in guiding the younger generation to develop in a healthy, balanced, and humane way.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media has a significant impact on the lives of teenagers in Hinai Kiri Village, both mentally, physically, and socially. Excessive use can trigger sleep disturbances, anxiety, low self-esteem, and a decline in direct social interaction. Social media, which should serve as a positive tool, can instead become a source of pressure if not used wisely. Guidance from parents, teachers, and the community is needed to direct teenagers to use social

media in a healthy way. Schools need to instill digital literacy and mental health awareness, while families should build open communication and limit gadget use at night. These findings highlight the importance of collaboration between education, family, and community in maintaining the balance of adolescent development in the digital era. This research also serves as a basis for strengthening digital literacy programs and developing social activities that support real-life interactions. The study is limited to one region with a qualitative approach, so the results cannot yet be generalized. In addition, psychological symptoms have not been clinically tested, so further, broader, and more measurable studies are needed to reinforce the findings.

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