

Social Media as a Learning Tool in the Digital Education Era

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has changed the learning paradigm toward a more flexible, interactive, and student-centered educational process. One manifestation of this transformation is the use of social media as a learning tool. This study aims to analyze the role of social media in learning, identify its benefits and challenges, and formulate strategies for optimizing its use in supporting educational processes in the digital era. The study employed a qualitative approach using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. Data were collected from scientific articles published over the last five years and analyzed through content analysis techniques. The findings indicate that social media enhances learning interaction and collaboration, expands access to learning resources, promotes independent learning, and increases students' motivation and engagement. However, its implementation also faces several challenges, including learning distractions, information validity, data security, and limited digital literacy. Therefore, the effective use of social media in education requires strengthening digital literacy, improving educators' competencies, and implementing well-planned learning strategies to enhance the quality of learning sustainably.

Keywords: *Digital Literacy, Digital Learning, Interactive Learning, Learning Access, Social Media.*

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1. | INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including in the field of education. Increasingly massive digitalization is driving a transformation in the learning process, from previously centered on conventional learning to learning that utilizes various digital platforms more flexibly and interactively (Ansari & Khan, 2020; Awidi & Paynter, 2024). In the context of 21st century education, the use of digital technology is no longer seen as a complement to learning, but has become one of the needs that supports the creation of an effective, adaptive, and relevant learning process to the characteristics of today's students (Hidir et al., 2023).

One form of digital technology development that is experiencing very rapid growth is social media. The presence of social media has changed the pattern of communication and interaction of the community, including in educational activities. Platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Telegram, and TikTok are not only used as a means of entertainment and personal communication, but also begin to be used as a medium to share information, build learning communities, and support online and offline learning activities (Kumar & Nanda, 2022; Perez et al., 2023). These developments show that social media has great potential to become an innovative learning tool and in accordance with the needs of education in the digital era.

Various studies show that the use of social media in learning is able to increase interaction, collaboration, and involvement of students in the learning process. Social media allows students to access learning materials more broadly, discuss actively, and build more meaningful learning experiences through the rapid exchange of information and knowledge without space and time limits (Rasheed et al., 2020; Sabah, 2023). In addition, social media also provides opportunities for educators to develop a more creative and participatory learning model through various features available on each platform (Widhanarto et al., 2024).

The use of social media in learning is also in line with the student-centered learning paradigm. In this paradigm, students are encouraged to play an active role in building knowledge through exploration, collaboration, and communication activities supported by digital technology (Awidi & Paynter, 2024; Mu'aggil et al., 2023). Various social media platforms provide a space that allows two-way interaction between educators and students as well as between fellow students so that they can increase learning motivation and enrich the learning experience (Azizah, 2024).

However, the use of social media in learning also faces various challenges. The ease of access to information through social media is not always followed by the ability of users to select and verify the information obtained. This condition has the potential to cause the dissemination of invalid information, information overload, and the emergence of distractions that can interfere with students' learning concentration (Sobaih et al., 2020; Nawaf et al., 2023). In addition, the use of social media that is not

properly managed can also cause various other problems, such as dependence on social media, low digital ethics, and risks to user security and privacy (Al-Qaysi et al., 2020; Sarginson & Wendler, 2024).

Various studies in Indonesia and at the international level show that the success of using social media as a means of learning is greatly influenced by the level of digital literacy, educator competence, and learning management strategies applied (Yanthi et al., 2024; Milala et al., 2024). Therefore, efforts are needed to optimize the use of social media through strengthening digital literacy, selecting platforms that are in accordance with learning objectives, and designing learning activities that are structured and oriented towards achieving student competencies (Saputra, 2021; Alamin & Missouri, 2023).

Based on this description, social media has a great opportunity to be used as a means of learning that supports the transformation of digital education. However, its utilization needs to be balanced with the right strategy so that the benefits obtained can be optimized and various challenges that arise can be minimized. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of social media as a means of learning, identify the benefits and challenges of its use in the learning process, and formulate strategies for optimizing the use of social media to support more effective, interactive, and sustainable learning (Denojean-Mairet et al., 2024; Salsabila et al., 2020).

2. | RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The SLR method was chosen because it allows researchers to identify, collect, evaluate, and synthesize various research findings in a systematic and comprehensive manner regarding the use of social media as a means of learning. This approach also provides a more comprehensive overview of the development of social media concepts, benefits, challenges, and implementation strategies in the learning process based on previously published empirical evidence. The use of SLR is considered relevant in educational research because it is able to produce structured knowledge mapping and provide a strong conceptual basis for the development of academic studies on a certain theme.

The study process is carried out through several stages that refer to the principles of systematic review, namely planning, identification of data sources, literature selection, data extraction, analysis, and synthesis of research results. In the planning stage, the researcher set the focus of the study on the use of social media as a means of learning in the context of general education. The focus is directed at discussing the role of social media in learning, the benefits of its use, various challenges faced, and strategies for optimizing the use of social media in supporting the learning process in the digital era.

The source of research data is in the form of scientific articles obtained through the Google Scholar database. The selection of Google Scholar is based on its wide range of indexation and its ability to provide a wide range of scientific publications from national

and international journals relevant to the research theme. The search process was carried out using several keywords, including social media in education, social media as learning tools, social media learning, digital learning, social media as a means of learning, social media in education, and digital literacy. The inclusion criteria applied include articles published in the last five years, available in the form of full text, discussing the use of social media in learning, and having relevance to the educational context in general. Meanwhile, articles that do not fit the focus of the research, are published outside the set time frame, or do not provide adequate information are excluded from the analysis process.

The data obtained is then analyzed qualitatively through content analysis techniques. The first stage is carried out by thoroughly reading each article that has met the selection criteria to identify the main themes that emerge. Furthermore, the data is categorized based on the focus of the discussion, namely the concept of social media in learning, the benefits of using social media, implementation challenges, and strategies for optimizing its use. The next stage is a synthesis of various research findings to find patterns, relationships, and trends that emerge from various literature sources. The results of the synthesis are then interpreted descriptively to produce a comprehensive understanding of the use of social media as a means of learning and its implications for the development of learning in the digital era.

3. | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the literature review show that the development of digital technology has encouraged a change in the learning paradigm towards a more open, flexible, and collaborative learning process. In this context, social media is no longer seen solely as a means of communication and entertainment, but has also developed into a medium that can support learning activities. Various studies show that social media platforms allow for more intensive interaction between educators and learners and expand access to diverse learning resources (Ansari & Khan, 2020; Awidi & Paynter, 2024). The use of social media is also in line with the demands of 21st century learning which emphasizes mastery of digital literacy, critical thinking skills, creativity, communication, and collaboration (Hidir et al., 2023).

Literature findings show that social media has characteristics that support the creation of interactive and student-centered learning. Platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Telegram, and TikTok provide features that allow users to share information, discuss, convey ideas, and build online learning communities (Kumar & Nanda, 2022; Perez et al., 2023). This condition provides an opportunity for students to gain a more meaningful learning experience because the learning process is no longer limited to formal classrooms. Students can access learning materials anytime and anywhere so that the learning process becomes more flexible and sustainable (Denojean-Mairet et al., 2024).

Various studies show that the use of social media contributes to increased student involvement in learning. Rasheed et al. (2020) explain that interactions built through social media can increase participation, creativity, and knowledge-sharing behaviors among learners. Similar findings were put forward by Sabah (2023) who stated that the integration of social media and collaborative learning has a positive effect on students' academic performance. Social media allows students to actively engage in discussions, exchange information, and work together to complete various learning tasks. Thus, learning becomes more participatory and is no longer dominated by the role of educators as the only source of information.

The results of the study also show that social media is able to expand access to learning resources. Various platforms provide materials in the form of text, images, audio, and video that can be leveraged to support learning. Milala et al. (2024) explained that the use of YouTube as a learning medium can increase students' understanding because the material can be learned repeatedly according to the needs of each individual. In addition, Instagram and TikTok have also begun to be used as learning media through the presentation of educational content in the form of visuals that are attractive and easy to understand (Saputra, 2021). This condition shows that social media is able to support a more contextual learning process and in accordance with the characteristics of the digital generation.

The findings of the study also show that the use of social media can increase students' motivation and learning independence. Through social media, students have the opportunity to explore various sources of knowledge independently and build a more personalized learning experience. Awidi and Paynter (2024) explained that social media can expand the boundaries between formal and informal learning so that students can learn through various activities carried out outside the school environment. A bibliometric study conducted by Mu'aggil et al. (2023) also shows that the trend of research on social media in education continues to increase because social media is considered to be able to support independent learning and lifelong learning.

Although it has various potentials, the results of the study show that the use of social media in learning also faces a number of challenges. One of the problems that is often found is the emergence of learning distractions due to the amount of information and non-educational content available on social media. Sobaih et al. (2020) explain that uncontrolled use of social media has the potential to disrupt learning concentration and reduce learning effectiveness. In addition, Nawaf et al. (2023) emphasized that low digital literacy can cause students to have difficulties in selecting information obtained through social media.

In addition to the problem of distractions, another challenge found is related to information validity and digital security. Al-Qaysi et al. (2020) explained that the acceptance of technology in social media-based learning is influenced by user perceptions of ease of use and benefits obtained. However, such perceptions must be balanced with the ability to evaluate the quality of information accessed. Sarginson and

Wendler (2024) added that the use of social media in education requires attention to the ethical, privacy, and security aspects of user data. Therefore, digital literacy skills are one of the important factors in supporting the effective and responsible use of social media.

Various studies have also shown that the success of the implementation of social media as a means of learning is influenced by the competence of educators and the learning strategies applied. Widhanarto et al. (2024) explained that social media-based learning strategies and educators' digital competencies have a significant relationship with the quality of online learning. The findings show that the use of social media cannot be done spontaneously, but requires systematic planning and good management in order to produce meaningful learning.

In general, the results of the literature synthesis show several benefits and challenges of using social media as a means of learning as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Synthesis of the Benefits and Challenges of Using Social Media as a Means of Learning

Aspects	Key Findings
Learning Interactions	Improve communication and collaboration between educators and learners
Access to Learning	Facilitate access to various learning resources and materials
Learning Motivation	Increase student participation, creativity, and engagement
Flexibility	Supports learning without space and time limits
Digital Literacy	Encourage the ability to find, manage, and evaluate information
Challenge	Learning distractions, information validity, data security, and digital divide

The findings in this study also show that social media has the potential to support more innovative learning through the implementation of structured learning strategies. Azizah (2024) explained that social media can be integrated with a microlearning approach through the presentation of short and accessible materials. Yanthi et al. (2024) also found that the use of social media at various levels of education has a positive impact on student engagement when accompanied by good learning management. These findings are in line with the research of Alamin and Missouri (2023) which shows that social media is able to increase student involvement in digital learning through discussion activities, information sharing, and learning collaboration.

The results of the study show that social media has a strategic role as a means of learning in the digital era. Social media is able to increase interaction, expand access to

learning resources, encourage independent learning, and increase student involvement in the learning process. However, these benefits can only be achieved if the use of social media is supported by an adequate level of digital literacy, good educator competence, and a planned learning strategy. Therefore, the use of social media in education needs to be directed not only at the use of technology alone, but also at the development of a critical, ethical, and responsible digital learning culture so that social media can become an effective and sustainable means of learning.

4. | CONCLUSION

The development of digital technology has encouraged transformation in the world of education, including the use of social media as a means of learning. Based on the results of the literature review, social media has great potential to support a more interactive, flexible, and student-oriented learning process. Various social media platforms allow for more intensive communication and collaboration between educators and students and provide wider access to a wide range of learning resources that can be used anytime and anywhere. The use of social media in learning also provides various benefits, including increasing learning motivation, expanding opportunities to share knowledge, encouraging independent learning, increasing creativity, and strengthening student involvement in the learning process. The existence of various features on social media allows the creation of a more contextual learning experience, in accordance with the characteristics of the digital generation who are used to using technology in their daily lives.

However, the use of social media as a means of learning also faces a number of challenges, such as the emergence of learning distractions, low ability to verify information, potential violations of privacy and data security, and digital literacy gaps. Therefore, the use of social media in learning requires planned management and is supported by adequate digital competence. Social media can be an effective and relevant means of learning in supporting educational transformation in the digital era if it is properly integrated into the learning process. Strengthening digital literacy, improving educator competence, and developing systematic and responsible learning strategies are important factors to optimize the use of social media so that it can make a positive contribution to sustainably improving the quality of learning.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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