



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
MODERN TRENDS IN
SOCIAL SCIENCES
(IJMTSS)
www.ijmtss.com



HOW DO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MEDAN CITY UNDERSTAND AND IMPLEMENT DIGITAL DETOXIFICATION?

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Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 26.10.2022

Revised date: 30.11.2022

Accepted date: 05.12.2022

Published date: 15.12.2022

To cite this document:

Sitepu, Y. S., Harahap, H., & Rajagukguk, M. (2022). How Do High School Students In Medan City Understand And Implement Digital Detoxification? *International Journal of Modern Trends in Social Sciences*, 5 (22), 22-36.

DOI: 10.35631/IJMTSS.522003

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Abstract:

This study examines the pattern of using digital devices and efforts to implement detoxification among high school students. This study aims to obtain in-depth information on how high school students carry out digital detoxification efforts to reduce the impact of addiction. This type of research is qualitative with a case study method on the senior high school in Medan City, North Sumatra Province. This study uses a focus group discussion approach to obtain information from research informants. The informants comprised 14 students from 6 senior high schools and vocational high schools in Medan City. In this research, students take digital detoxification steps to minimize the negative impact of using digital devices. High school students use digital detoxification to neutralize their addiction to digital media daily. Things to do to detoxify digitally are learning to manage time when using digital devices, limiting internet access, implementing healthy lifestyles such as exercising or socializing, and following a social media detox.

Keywords:

Social Media Usage, Digital Detoxification, High School Students.

Introduction

Generation Z, as a young age group, has dominated the proportion of the population in Indonesia (BPS - Statistics Indonesia, 2021). Nielsen Media Indonesia has noted that Generation Z, a technology-literate generation, controls 30% of the population in 11 big cities

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in Indonesia (Ginting, 2020), where Medan City is one of the ten big cities set by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia (Aziza & Kartikaningrum, 2020).

Generation Z is a digital native who mostly understands technological developments and can adapt to digitalization (Arkhipova et al., 2019; Hinduan et al., 2020). The internet has become a medium to form their identity (Csobanka, 2016). Digital technology makes generation Z as people who are more flexible in finding and receiving information sources to assist learning compared to their predecessors (Arkhipova et al., 2019; Dániel Gergő, 2016; Dimock, 2019). Even students consider themselves more tech-savvy than their teachers (Cilliers, 2017).

Teenagers who are high school students are part of Generation Z. This age group has skills in using advanced technology devices and developing these abilities independently (Lazonder et al., 2020). This young group communicates its values through social media (Charles, 2020; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018). This generation is a unique age group with different needs, expectations, perspectives, and aspirations from previous age groups (Seemiller & Grace, 2017).

A study entitled *Social Media Usage and Digital Detoxification on Teenagers in Medan* in 2019 noted that 52% of adolescents aged 14-17 years had owned a smartphone since the age of 11-13 years. This study also found that 47.7% of them had used the internet at the age of 11-13 years, 40% at the age of 7-10 years, and only 12.3% of teenagers had used the internet at 14-17 years old (Sitepu & Harahap, 2019).

The level of addiction to internet use is one of the prominent issues that is keep highlighted in this digital era, especially for teenagers as subjects in research. Several previous studies were used to accommodate our research on digital detoxification efforts by students. Research by Wolniewicz et al. (2018) entitled *Problematic smartphone use and relations with negative affect, fear of missing out, and fear of negative and positive evaluation*, aims to test the variables fears of positive and negative evaluation, negative affect, and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Research involving 296 students using the bold survey method shows that FoMO syndrome is a psychopathological phenomenon that most often attacks smartphone users among teenagers. Excessive use of smartphones is the main problem why this syndrome attacks many users, especially students as subjects in this study.

Research by Aksoy (2018) entitled *A Qualitative Study on the Reasons for Social Media Addiction* became a research reference that has been used later. This study, which aims to determine the causes of social media addiction, uses 25 student informants who define themselves as social media addicts. This study found that a lack of friends caused the causes of social media dependence by students, meeting the needs of social interaction using social media, feeling satisfied, FoMO, and establishing relationships obtained from social media and everyday life.

However, this generation spends more time in virtual social spaces than face-to-face, which can harm their psychological health in the future (Kardaras, 2016). Teenagers' internet use from an early age can also impact the intensity of the time they need. The study entitled *Online Risks Research in Teenagers: Survey on Teenagers as Social Media Users in Medan* found that 43.3% of adolescents in Medan City spent more than 4 hours accessing the internet (Harahap & Sitepu, 2019). This finding was further strengthened by a survey by the Alvara Research

Center, where internet users in the Generation Z category were classified as addicted (more than 7 hours a day) (Alvara Research Center, 2020).

The level of individual depression and anxiety experienced by high school students compared to other Generation Z age groups causes them to experience social media addiction (Simsek et al., 2019). This addiction is also based on a lack of self-respect (Hawi & Samaha, 2017). Other reasons for addiction to social media are lack of friends, use of social media which is considered an activity, fulfillment of satisfaction, following current events, and finally, mingling with real life (Aksoy, 2018).

Social media addiction is inseparable from the activities of this age group, who intensively use the internet (Tutgun-Ünal & Deniz, 2015). Most students realize that their life is somewhat incomplete and more difficult without digital tools and tools (Wood & Muñoz, 2021). The internet, especially social media, is said to be one of the most dangerous media among technology addicts, which can give a feeling of drug addiction (Ryding & Kaye, 2018; Zahariades, 2018). Users will spend excessive time on social networking sites, so they cannot control themselves in accessing them (Alwagait et al., 2015; Kirik et al., 2015).

Social media addiction potentially impacts mental health disorders users (Dhir et al., 2018; Hou et al., 2019). Pathologically, addicts will be happier when using the internet but feel restless when not using it (Longstreet & Brooks, 2017). Narcissism, loneliness, and fear of being ostracized by the environment trigger a mental health problem called FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) (Blackwell et al., 2017). FoMO has become a psychopathological phenomenon, where users place too many smartphones as a necessity and feel worried when they lose valuable experiences or information (Wolniewicz et al., 2018).

Critical insights about a good therapeutic model for internet addicts must be encouraged, not only by completely cutting off internet access (Ryding & Kaye, 2018). Most users can not be separated from digital devices and desire to use them (Wilcockson et al., 2019). Therefore, digital detoxification is essential for internet users. We must realize that information on the internet is as plentiful as the snacks that can be found easily around us (Brabazon, 2012). Digital detoxification can be the activity where the internet user limits the usage of digital devices for short or long periods (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020). Regulations on device access restrictions, especially for students, must be balanced with various parties' encouragement and policies (Ugur & Koc, 2015).

Continuously social media usage can grow and shape the environment for contemporary society (Dunas & Vartanov, 2020). Social media is possibly touched by every level of society, especially the younger generation as the most significant social media users (Perrin, 2015). It is inseparable from the various services offered by social media, such as social networking sites, microblogs, blogs, chat platforms, open-source mapping, and sharing photos and videos with each user (Gastelum & Whattam, 2013).

Social media can be a medium that allows users and communities to create, collaborate, and edit various types of content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Communication through social media can allow some exchanges between a sender and a recipient and between many senders and recipients (Theiner et al., 2018).

The widespread popularity of social media in the community makes them fluent in use and highly dependent on the internet (Jordan, 2013). The internet has become an inseparable part of everyday life, especially for the younger generation (Öksüz et al., 2018). Today, the internet has become a widespread information infrastructure, the initial prototype of which is often referred to as the national and global information infrastructures (Leiner et al., 2009).

Literature Review

Four points will be discussed in Literature Review: Digital Addiction in Adolescents, Digital Detoxification Model, Media Dependency Theory, and Technology Determinism Theory.

Digital Addiction in Adolescents

Addiction to digital use is an effect of the surplus use of digital technology based on habit and lack of self-control (Allcott et al., 2022). In the case of digital addiction, exposure is everywhere, unavoidable, and even access exceeds normal time limits (Christakis, 2019). This situation illustrates that many people use technology excessively, which can make users unproductive (Montag & Walla, 2016). Therefore, early detection of the risk of digital addiction among children is increasingly becoming necessary (Hawi et al., 2019). Concerns about addiction to compulsive and excessive use of this technology are still not accompanied by a diagnostic system or conceptualization of mental health problems (Basel et al., 2020). The widespread use of digital media can adversely affect users' physical and mental health (Meng et al., 2022).

Digital Detoxification Model

Purohit et al. (2020) describe a digital detoxification model as follows:

1) **Eliminate Triggers**

One of the external triggers is the number of notifications from social media. In addition, there is also an internal trigger, namely, their favorite social media platform he often uses without realizing it because he is bored.

2) **Restricting User Actions**

Each content or application is personalized and customized to increase the opportunities for action on the platform, giving the user the potential to view linked content that is not initially interested in but can easily access. Therefore, there need to be restrictions on these actions.

3) **Reduce Appreciation**

Websites or apps often offer rewards to make them stay longer on the site. Users need to minimize being tempted by the offer.

4) **Reduce the Interest**

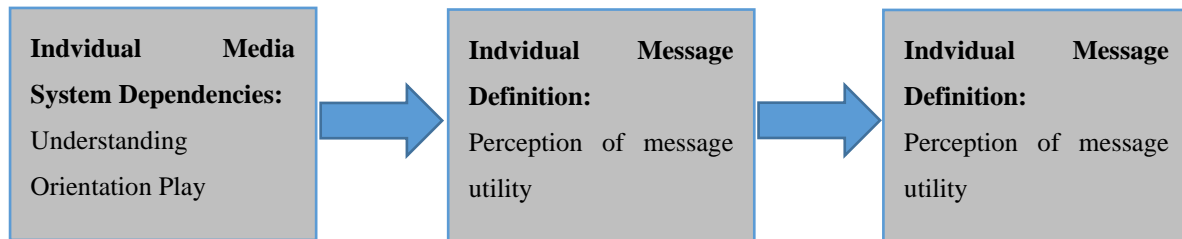
The interest in question is following various favorite accounts on social media, both in the form of pages and regular accounts. Reducing the intensity of not following the development of information can be a method for social media users to do a digital detoxification.

Media System Dependency Theory

Media System Dependency Theory is a theory of media effects as one of the cultural studies movements and is considered part of a larger structuralism school. This theory influenced modernization in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s (Allen, 2017; van Elteren, 2014). *Media System Dependency Theory* is a theory that encourages the media to become more influential whenever there is a significant disturbance in the social world. When social change happens so quickly, and the people we usually ask for opinions do not understand the problem,

we tend to rely more on the media to get information about it. (Kim & Jung, 2017; Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

Table 1: Media System Dependency Theory Model



Source: (Kim & Jung, 2017)

Dependency is defined as a relationship that, within its framework, provides fulfillment of the needs and achievement of one party's goal in a relationship that depends on the resources of the other party. The definition includes a wide range of media dependencies, ranging from the need to find goods in supermarkets to the needs of the public. In other words, audiences become dependent on the media because they need to obtain information for decision-making. (Mehrad & Yousefi, 2018).

Technological Determinism Theory

Technology shapes how individuals think and behave in society, leading people to move from one technological century to another (Nurudin, 2015). The concept of technological determinism is based on the proposition that technology is the main engine driving economic growth, social change, democracy, and modernization in society, thereby fostering the belief that technology determines social life and the economy of society (Lin, 2014). Technological Determinism Theory in society is influenced and shaped by technological developments, which must adjust and adapt to new technologies and innovations (Mardiana & Daniels, 2019).

Several stages need to be considered in this theoretical concept (Khan, 2020; Nurudin, 2015):

- 1) Discoveries in communication technology lead to cultural changes;
- 2) Changes in the types of communication eventually shape human life; and
- 3) McLuhan said, "We form the tools for communicating, and finally, the tools for communicating that we use to shape or influence our own lives."

Technological Determinism Theory, in this case, becomes a belief that technology, through the expansion of computers, networks, and the internet, is the main initiator of societal transformation. Technology has also changed many aspects, not only of human communication but also of the nature and way of life of all people and individuals in acting (Hauer, 2017).

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach, collecting data through Observation and Focus Group Discussion. Observations in research aim to describe a phenomenon based on interpretive rules using verbal descriptive data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Observations refer to the literature review used in this study. Here, we would like to take a quick look at the scope of high school students use of ICT and social media, how their psychological and physical health while using the media, to describe students' perceptions of addiction to using the internet.

Focus Group Discussion is a qualitative research method, the purpose of which is to gather information from informants through interviews in a group centered on the interviewer (Grønmo, 2019). The Focus Group Discussion method has been used to obtain a comprehensive picture of the impact of social media on the health of high school students who use social media, as well as the efforts they make as a form of the digital detoxification.

Research Informant

Determination of informants in the study using a sampling technique in the form of purposive sampling, as follows:

- 1) Status as a high school student in Medan City;
- 2) The natives of Medan City;
- 3) Have a smartphone; and
- 4) Active users of social media.

This study involved 14 students from 6 high schools in Medan city, namely SMK Negeri Binaan Provinsi Sumatera Utara, SMK Broadcast Dirga Media Bangsa, SMA Swasta Harapan 3 Medan, SMA Negeri 14 Medan, SMK Negeri 8 Medan, and SMK Swasta Bina Media.

Topics in Research

This research will examine several things, such as the following:

- 1) The motives for using social media among high school students are to:
 - a. gain status and express opinions (expressing opinion & status gain);
 - b. social interaction;
 - c. information search;
 - d. entertainment and recreation (entertainment and entertainment).
- 2) The pattern of social media use among adolescents in Medan City (media habit) is measured by the frequency and duration of social media access.
- 3) The negative impact they feel from social media on their health.
- 4) The efforts they make or the restrictions made by parents and schools on using gadgets and social media.

Result

Observation Results

Starting our research, we found that digital device usage by some students experienced physical problems. In particular, they experience minus eye, which over time, increases. In addition, most of them activate notifications on their social media accounts, especially WhatsApp and Facebook. Some of them admitted that the notification annoyed them, especially from the light that appeared when the notification came in.

Other perceived impacts related to the use of social media can also be seen from the psychological aspect. Some high school students often feel insecure when they see uploads of their friends wearing classy clothes. In addition, they feel inferior to their ideal physical appearance or upload the achievements of their friends. On several occasions, some beautify and perform routine maintenance such as diet, taking vitamins, and using cosmetics. However, other students ignored this and focused more on developing themselves. They consider themselves physically fit and put their health first, rather than feeling inferior when they see other people's appearance.

High school students familiar with the use of digital media stated that they still needed to be satisfied with their achievements. However, they still like who they are now. They are still grateful for whatever God has given them. These students also have various advantages from their talents; some are active students in their classes and schools. Some of the student's abilities are music, technology, literature, to sports.

However, the information they receive only sometimes lifts their spirits or moods. However, there is also information that "drops" them mentally. Distrust will arise when they see their friends are better (physical, appearance/fashion, achievement) than themselves. Of course, the adolescent's ego will increase and cause jealousy which continues in their distrust of abilities. It is undeniable that high school students are teenagers still in the stage of finding their identity.

Another negative impact is the acquisition of information overload. There is a tendency for those who often seek some pieces of information that are entertaining, specifically related to their idols, potentially causing Fear of Missing Out syndrome in teenagers. They try to keep up with idols' information and then unknowingly become addicted to them. Things previously positive for the soul can backfire against these students.

Social Media Usage

The findings in the Focus Group Discussion show that there are several types of social media used by high school students, namely Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Line. Participants who use Twitter expressed the reason why they use Twitter. Some of those reasons are: to see news developments (both in the form of soft news and hard news), skincare recommendations, quotes, fansites (South Korean public figures, aka K-Pop), and funny and entertaining threads. They get this information through their social media homepage or the hashtag feature.

Furthermore, the students who used Facebook revealed several reasons for using social media. Students use Facebook to communicate with old friends at once to see their friends' posts. Some only use Facebook as a medium to get VIP access for free on the JOOX music streaming service platform. Another exciting thing is that some participants do not have Facebook because there is a ban from their parents. Some do not use Facebook because they are not interested and have never had an account. They have a reason that Facebook is too broad. The students want a simplified interface to communicate/chat, like using LINE or WhatsApp.

Instagram is a social media used by all participants of high school students. Some have even used Instagram since 4th grade. Generally, they use Instagram to post photos on the go. Some use Instagram, then follow the teacher, so students' grades are safe. Similar to Instagram, YouTube is a social media shared by all high school students. They use social media to watch various videos that can entertain them.

WhatsApp is one type of social media used by almost all participants. Some of them are also actively using LINE social media. Both social media have main features in the form of chat, generally used as a class group (sending important information, discussing school assignments, and more) and family groups. Whatsapp and LINE are also most often checked to view messages, both private messages, and group messages.

Daily Characteristics of Using the Internet and Digital Media

Internet users must be kept from the activities of high school students familiar with digital technology. The results of the Focus Group Discussion showed that some of them used the internet for more than 10 hours for school materials and assignments. Other students spend 3 to 5 hours. Meanwhile, students who have busy activities and schedules at school only spend about 3 hours a day.

Several schools in Medan City allow the use of smartphones in face-to-face learning. However, not all subjects allow using smartphones and the internet during the learning process. Their teacher will confiscate all the devices belonging to the high school student, then return them when the lesson ends.

Regarding internet access usage, some of them have Wi-fi at home as a medium to access various features in digital media. Meanwhile, most of them use data packages that cost some money for their private internet access, in the range of 60,000 IDR to 140,000 IDR Money was given by their parents, who are also active internet users.

Efforts and Knowledge of High School Students on Digital Detoxification

High school students also have unique characteristics in using the internet or social media. They admit that they rarely upload photos on their social media pages. Usually, they wait for the right moment or an aesthetic place to upload it to their social media.

When high school students want to upload their favorite photos to their social media platforms, some will constantly check the post. They will continue to see how many people liked and commented on their posts. Some students who identify as extroverts expect feedback and feedback from their peers, which can make them feel happy. Meanwhile, other students admitted that once they uploaded a post, they did not care how many likes and comments they got. However, they will still respond if a notification enters their account.

Regarding the pattern of habits in using digital devices, there are some notes that the researchers found. First, when students eat with their families at home, they will only bring their mobile devices into the dining room when they eat at a restaurant. They are very minimal in using smartphones, except when they want to take pictures with their family.

Another example is when they are having a reunion or gathering with old friends, they will not use their smartphones and focus on chatting with their friends. If caught using a smartphone at an event, they will give a hint to that person.

When they drive a vehicle, students never use their digital devices to notify their progress via status. Likewise, if there is an incoming notification, they rarely check the notification. However, in times of emergency, some of them will use digital devices. For example, when riding a motorcycle, they will hold the phone to their ear, tucking it in with their helmet.

The pattern of students using digital media by teenagers that also deserves to be noteworthy is the digital media activity at home. Several students who participated in the Focus Group Discussion admitted that when they were on the toilet, they often brought their cellphones to listen to music to improve their mood. Another participant said they carried their mobile device when they went to the toilet for a long time. In addition to listening to music, digital media is

recognized by all high school students as very helpful for them in the learning process. Digital media through the alarm/reminder feature also benefits student activities.

High school students admit that their average bedtime ranges from 10 pm. until 11 pm. Some wake up at 3 am to pray tahajjud, and some wake up at 5 am to study or prepare for school. On weekends or holidays, participants usually wake up at 9 am. Some of these students admitted that the quality of their rest still needed improvement, not because of the use of social media but because school activities were so crowded.

All high school students have never heard of a digital detox. However, one of them understood the meaning of detoxification. Researchers then equate the purpose of digital detoxification with the human body. If our bodies consume a lot of fast food, soft drinks, and the like, our bodies will be filled with toxins. Then the researchers explained that we need to eat fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods to neutralize these toxins.

Then the researcher explained the definition of digital detoxification as a condition where a person has an addiction to digital media in the form of gadgets/devices and tries to reduce the problem. Several things can be applied, namely limiting playing hours, making a To-Do List, and giving appreciation to ourselves and others. The researcher explained that students could arrange the planning. One of them is setting one day not to use smartphones.

After knowing the meaning of digital detoxification, participants revealed some social media applications that were so distracting or unimportant. An example is Line, an app that was removed by some more active students using WhatsApp. In addition, there are also photo editing applications and games that they discard because they are considered annoying or useless.

Discussion

The results showed that the intensity of time spent by high school teenagers using the internet classified as heavy users, and some were addicted. It can be seen from the time spent using the internet on weekdays or when they are doing learning activities, which is between 3 to 5 hours, even 10 hours. It is in line with the provisions set by the Alvara Research Center that classified internet use for 4-6 hours as heavy users and above 7 hours as addicted users (Alvara Research Center, 2020).

The finding of the intensity of internet usage also strengthens that many of the learning process activities carried out by high school students supported using the internet (Escudero Nahón, 2021). It was indicated by student statements who better understand each material or task with the help of some applications or learning media available online. Internet access usage varies, starting from using Wi-fi, data plans, or even both.

This study's digital device usage by high school teenagers potentially makes the users fall into the addictive category. The researcher asked one of the questions about what objects should be brought when a disaster occurs. Most high school students prioritize gadgets, in addition to food, to take with them in the event of a disaster. Even though there are many other significant things, such as valuable documents, safety equipment, and others, which are more necessary and worthwhile in the future to be "saved". However, the food choice proves they prioritize technology devices less.

How students take control of their digital device usage can be seen when they gather with family or joke with friends. However, there are still indications that they use gadgets at these moments, even though the intensity is relatively small (such as using camera features).

During the implementation of the research through Focus Group Discussion, the researcher also found the characteristics of high school students in using social media. In addition to using social media to communicate with distant relatives, they also take advantage of features in the messaging application to discuss or get information about lessons at school. In addition, they also use social media to get interesting information. The tendency of information obtained by students is entertaining and does not lead to much hard news.

The majority of students also do not use social media as a place to show narcissism. They more often spread uploads that are entertaining and informative. However, sometimes, they will upload things about themselves to their social media accounts if they are in a particular place or moment considered attractive by themselves and many people. In some situations, they tend to feel inferior when they see the uploads of their friends who have made proud achievements on their friends' social media pages.

Social media usage among adolescents in this study has positive and negative benefits. The positive thing about social media is that it is easy to reach many friends. Social media can be a space to develop themselves as students, especially in learning activities. Psychologically, the information that has been provided on social media can fulfill their need for information and entertainment so that they can balance their stress in learning.

Certain conditions experienced by adolescents should be able to control and overcome. The role of parents, family, schools, and the environment is needed to support their growth and development. In addition, detoxification can be the best way to reduce the negative things that attack cognitive and psychic when using social media, the internet, or digital devices.

The term digital detoxification is still a novelty among high school students. The common understanding of the importance of digital detoxification among teenagers as active social media users will drag them into the digital media flow. If they cannot control it, they will be swept away in it.

Researchers compared nutritious food that entered the human body as a digital detoxification process for students. The detoxification process carried out by foods such as vegetables, fruits, and other healthy foods can neutralize toxins in the body. The parable can be understood easily by students. Through this study, researchers found that teenagers' socialization and digital literacy education were still minimal. In addition, they are still challenging to interpret foreign words, so teenagers must use words they easily understand.

They understood that digital detoxification is when digital devices' active users reduce the intensity to avoid a more severe level of addiction. Some simple ways, such as limiting the time of using digital media, exercising, and doing other worthwhile activities, can be done to make digital detoxification successful among teenagers. Support from the people around them is also required to guide them in a better direction during the process of self-discovery that most teenagers face.

Furthermore, parents can apply the concept of rules in the form of a "No Phone Zone" in several rooms in the house, such as bathrooms, dining rooms, and others. In addition, teenagers can also create boundaries for themselves by applying the concept of No Phone Day, where students do not access digital media at all at once. Finally, students can dim their smartphone screens to maintain eye health if there is an urgent need for digital media.

In practice, the role of family and environment is needed to support the implementation of the detoxification process among students. In addition, the peer role is also necessary when having a gathering to minimize the use of digital devices and strengthen communication between them.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that there are positives and negatives to using digital media. Students can easily interact and discuss with their peers virtually when we talk about the positive impact of digital media usage. In addition, there is a wealth of information used by high school students, ranging from supporting their learning to their need for entertainment.

However, the potential negative impact of using digital media also exceptionally affects high school students, given that they are in the stage of self-discovery. Exposure to excessive and unfiltered information can cause teenagers to suffer from Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) syndrome, feel insecure after comparing themselves with each other, and even hurt themselves physically and psychologically.

To overcome this, students take digital detoxification steps to minimize the negative impact of using digital devices (McArthur, 2018). Teenagers use digital detoxification to neutralize the level of addiction to using digital media daily. Things to do to detoxify digital are learning to manage time when using digital devices, limiting internet access, implementing healthy lifestyles such as exercising or socializing, and a social media detox.

Acknowledgement

The research described in this paper is a research project called Talenta, under the auspices and funding of Universitas Sumatera Utara Research Institute (LP USU), with a contract number: 225/UN5.2.3.1/PPM/KP-TALENTA USU/2019

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