

Active on Social Media, Passive in Organizations? Exploring the Role of Communication in Student Engagement

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the relationship between social media activity, communication skills, and student engagement in organizational activities. Many students are active on social media but show low participation in formal campus organizations, raising questions about the role of communication in bridging online and offline engagement. Using a quantitative research approach, data were collected from 100 university students through a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring three variables: social media usage (X1), communication ability (X2), and organizational engagement (Y). The data were analyzed using multiple regression with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results reveal that communication ability has a significant positive effect on student engagement, while social media activity alone does not significantly influence organizational participation. However, when tested simultaneously, both variables jointly have a significant impact, suggesting that social media can serve as a supportive medium for engagement when combined with effective communication skills. The coefficient of determination (R^2) shows that 28.6% of student engagement variation can be explained by these two variables, while the rest is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. These findings indicate that communication plays a mediating role in transforming online social interactions into real-world participation, emphasizing the need for universities to enhance students' interpersonal and communicative competence to strengthen their involvement in campus organizations.

Keywords:

social media activity, communication ability, student engagement, organizational participation

Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed the way university students interact, communicate, and participate in campus organization activities. Social media today is not only a platform for entertainment but also a strategic tool for disseminating information, coordinating activities, and fostering student engagement. Platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok enable student organizations to reach their audiences quickly and effectively. Through these platforms, organizational leaders can announce events, encourage participation, and create an open space for two-way communication. This aligns with Nasrullah's (2020)

view that social media plays a crucial role in enhancing youth participation in social and organizational activities by building more dynamic interpersonal connections.

However, the use of social media alone is not sufficient to ensure active student involvement. Effective communication skills are required to make sure that messages delivered through social media are understood, capture attention, and motivate participation. Effective communication involves clarity in message delivery, empathy toward the audience, and the ability to build constructive dialogue. According to Robbins and Judge (2019), good communication within an organization enhances coordination efficiency, reduces conflict, and strengthens the sense of unity among members. In the context of student organizations, communication competence plays an essential role in maintaining relationships between leaders and members, which fosters a sense of belonging within the organization.

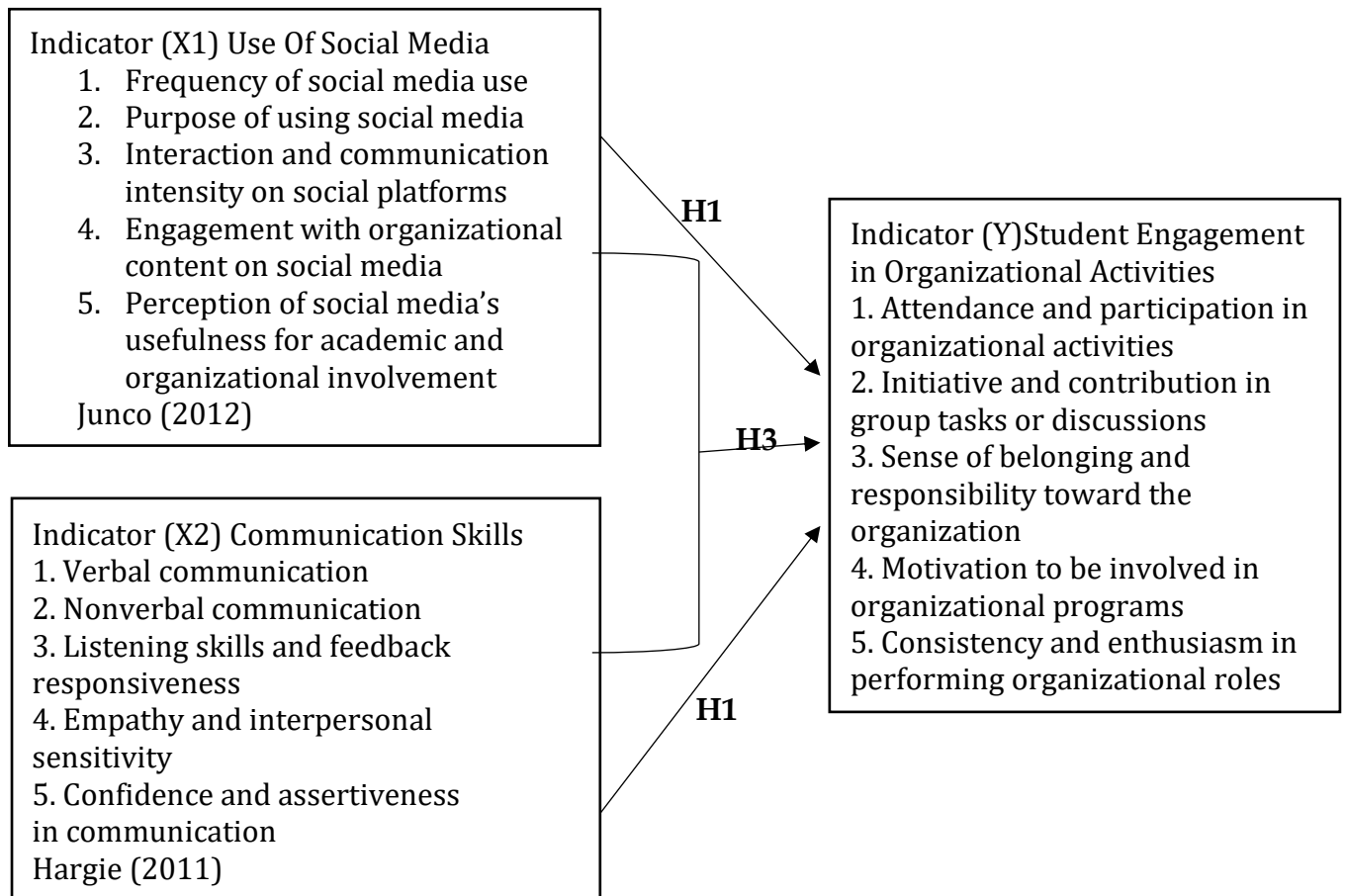
Furthermore, communication skills form the foundation of leadership within student organizations. Leaders who possess strong communication abilities can build trust and motivate members to engage more actively. Prasetyo (2021) found that effective interpersonal communication within student organizations contributes to greater loyalty and member participation. This suggests that communication that is not merely one-way but also responsive and participatory can create an inclusive organizational atmosphere.

Social media and communication competence are inherently interconnected. While social media provides the space to distribute messages, communication skills determine the quality and impact of those interactions. When organization leaders can effectively combine both, social media becomes a powerful tool to strengthen student engagement. A study by Kurniawan and Hidayat (2022) revealed that the integration of social media usage and strong communication skills increased student participation in campus activities by up to 40%. This finding highlights that the effectiveness of social media depends largely on how well communicators understand their audience and build appealing, relevant interactions.

Nevertheless, the use of social media in organizations also presents challenges. Not all students share the same level of digital literacy or motivation to participate in organizational activities. Misuse of social media such as excessive or irrelevant information may even decrease student engagement (Putri & Santoso, 2021). Therefore, communication strategies must be carefully designed to suit the characteristics and needs of the student audience.

In conclusion, social media and communication skills are two interdependent factors that play a significant role in enhancing student engagement in organizational activities. The integration of digital communication technology and interpersonal communication competence serves as a key foundation for student organizations to foster active, dynamic, and sustainable participation in the digital era.

Theoretical Framework



Social media has become an inseparable part of student life, transforming not only how information is shared but also how organizational engagement develops. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp provide students with access to communication networks that influence their participation in campus activities. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2023), social media functions as an interactive space that supports information exchange, collaboration, and the creation of shared meaning. These functions are particularly relevant in student organizations, where collaboration and engagement are essential for organizational sustainability.

The theory of Uses and Gratifications explains that individuals use social media to satisfy personal and social needs, such as communication, self-expression, and belongingness (Kircaburun et al., 2023). When applied to student organizations, this theory suggests that social media can serve as a bridge for students to feel connected, informed, and motivated to participate. However, while social media can facilitate engagement, passive consumption without active communication may limit meaningful involvement.

Communication competence plays an equally crucial role in enhancing engagement. According to Mc Croskey and Richmond (2022), communication competence refers to

the ability to convey messages effectively and appropriately within various social contexts. In student organizations, effective communication helps members express opinions, resolve conflicts, and collaborate toward shared goals. Without adequate communication skills, even active social media use may not translate into genuine participation. Therefore, the integration of communication competence and social media use creates a synergistic relationship that can strengthen student involvement in organizations.

Based on Social Presence Theory, online interactions that involve emotional expression and open communication can create a sense of belonging and mutual trust (Lowenthal & Dunlap, 2023). Students who perceive a strong social presence through social media are more likely to engage actively in organizational discussions, attend events, and take part in decision-making processes. Similarly, the Social Capital Theory emphasizes that online communication can build networks of trust and reciprocity, which in turn enhance participation in collective activities (Ellison et al., 2022).

From this theoretical foundation, the conceptual framework assumes that social media use affects student engagement both directly and indirectly through communication competence. Social media provides the platform and exposure, while communication competence ensures that such interactions are meaningful and productive. Students who are skilled in communication can transform online interactions into real-world organizational participation, bridging the gap between virtual connectivity and active involvement.

In analyzing this relationship, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the higher the level of social media engagement among students, the greater their participation in organizational activities provided they possess adequate communication skills. Conversely, social media use without communication competence may lead to superficial involvement. Thus, communication competence acts as a mediating variable that strengthens the influence of social media on organizational engagement.

Ultimately, this analysis implies that universities and student organizations should not only utilize social media as a promotional tool but also develop communication training programs to empower students to engage meaningfully in organizational life.

Method

This study employs a quantitative research method aimed at analyzing the influence of social media use and communication skills on students' engagement in organizational activities. The population in this research consists of university students, with a total sample of 100 respondents obtained through the distribution of a questionnaire as the main data collection instrument.

The questionnaire was developed using a Likert scale to measure the level of social media use, communication skills, and student engagement in organizational activities. The collected data were then processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The statistical analyses applied include regression analysis, t-test, and F-test to determine both the partial and simultaneous effects of the independent variables (social media use and communication skills) on the dependent variable (student engagement in organizational activities). In addition, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated to assess how much the two independent variables contribute to explaining the variation in student engagement.

A quantitative approach was chosen because it provides an objective, measurable, and systematic analysis of the relationships among variables. This approach also enables the researcher to produce findings that can be interpreted based on data directly obtained from respondents, allowing for a more accurate understanding of how social media use and communication skills influence students' participation in organizational activities.

Results

Jenis Kelamin

106 jawaban

 Salin diagram

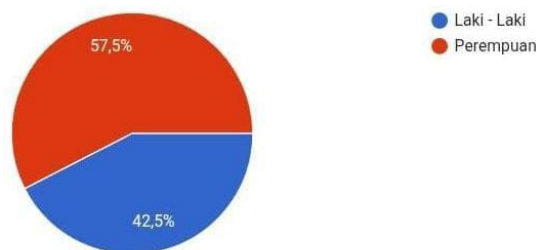


Figure 1. Respondent Gender

Based on the survey results from 106 respondents, it was found that 57.5% were female, while 42.5% were male. This indicates that female participation in completing the questionnaire was higher than that of male respondents.

Usia

106 jawaban

 Salin diagram

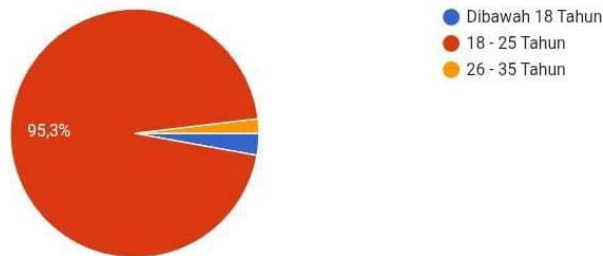


Figure 2. Respondent Age

Based on the survey results from 106 respondents, it was found that the majority of respondents were aged 18–25 years, accounting for 95.3%, while respondents under 18 years old and those aged 26–35 years represented only a small portion of the total respondents.

Tabel 1. Simple Regression

X1 Against Y

Model	Coefficients ^a										
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	20.211	3.728		5.422	<.001					
	Use of Social Media	.478	.094	.458	5.101	<.001	.458	.458	.458	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Student Engagement in Organizational Activities

The regression output shows that the Use of Social Media (X1) has an unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.478, with a significance value (Sig.) of < 0.001.

This means that for every one-unit increase in the use of social media, the level of student engagement in organizational activities (Y) increases by 0.478 units, assuming other factors remain constant. Since the p-value (Sig.) is less than 0.05, this relationship is statistically significant.

Tabel 2. Simple Regression

X2 Against Y

		Coefficients ^a										
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	19.424	4.608		4.215	<,001						
	Communication Skills	.480	.112	.397	4.285	<,001	.397	.397	.397	1.000	1.000	

a. Dependent Variable: Student Engagement in Organizational Activities

The regression results show that the Communication Skills (X2) variable has an unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.480, with a significance value (Sig.) of < 0.001. This indicates that for every one-unit increase in communication skills, the level of student engagement in organizational activities (Y) increases by 0.480 units, assuming other variables remain constant. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, this effect is statistically significant.

Table 3. Multiple Regression

		Coefficients ^a										
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	15.920	4.579		3.477	<,001						
	Use of Social Media	.359	.119	.344	3.013	.003	.458	.293	.268	.608	1.645	
	Communication Skills	.219	.138	.182	1.590	.115	.397	.159	.142	.608	1.645	

a. Dependent Variable: Student Engagement in Organizational Activities

Based on the table, the use of social media has been proven to have a significant effect on students' involvement in organizational activities, with a significance value of 0.003 indicating a positive relationship between the two. This means that the more frequently students use social media, the higher their participation in organizational activities. Meanwhile, communication skills do not have a significant effect, as indicated by a significance value of 0.115. The low VIF values also indicate that the regression model is free from multicollinearity issues. Overall, these results show that social media plays a greater role in enhancing student engagement in organizational activities compared to communication skills.

**Table 4. t-TEST
Coefficients^a**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	15.920	4.579		3.477	<,001
	Use of Social Media	.359	.119	.344	3.013	.003
	Communication Skills	.219	.138	.182	1.590	.115

a. Dependent Variable: Student Engagement in Organizational Activities

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that the use of social media has a significant influence on students' involvement in organizational activities, with a significance value of 0.003, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the higher the intensity of social media use, the greater the level of student participation in organizational activities. In contrast, communication skills have a significance value of 0.115, which is greater than 0.05, indicating no significant effect on student involvement. The Beta coefficient values show that the influence of social media use ($\beta = 0.344$) is stronger than that of communication skills ($\beta = 0.182$). Therefore, these results suggest that social media plays an important role as a medium that helps students become more active in interacting, obtaining information, and participating in various campus organizational activities.

**Table 5. F Test
ANOVA^a**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	849.021	2	424.510	14.474	<,001 ^b
	Residual	2844.939	97	29.329		
	Total	3693.960	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Student Engagement in Organizational Activities

b. Predictors: (Constant), Communication Skills, Use of Social Media

Based on the ANOVA table above, the F value is 14.474 with a significance level of < 0.001. The significance value, which is much smaller than 0.05, indicates that the regression model involving social media use and communication skills simultaneously has a significant effect on students' involvement in organizational activities. This means that both independent variables together can explain the variations that occur in the level of student involvement. Therefore, this regression model is considered appropriate for explaining the relationship between social

media use, communication skills, and student engagement in organizational activities.

Table 6. Test Of the Coefficient Of Determination

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.479 ^a	.230	.214	5.416	1.913

a. Predictors: (Constant), Communication Skills, Use of Social Media

b. Dependent Variable: Student Engagement in Organizational Activities

Based on the Model Summary table, the R value of 0.479 indicates a fairly strong relationship between social media use and communication skills with students' involvement in organizational activities. The R Square value of 0.230 means that these two variables are able to explain 23% of the variation in student involvement, while the remaining percentage is influenced by other factors outside the model. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.913 also indicates the absence of autocorrelation, suggesting that the regression model is appropriate and reliable for explaining the relationship among the variable.

Discussion

However, when both variables are analyzed simultaneously, they collectively have a significant impact on student engagement in organizational activities. These findings suggest that communication.

The results of this study show that communication ability has a significant and positive influence on student engagement and organizational participation, while social media activity alone does not have a significant effect when tested partially. ability plays a crucial mediating role in transforming social media interactions into real-world participation.

This outcome aligns with Junco (2012), who found that social media use can enhance student engagement only when it supports meaningful communication and collaboration. Students who possess strong communication skills are able to turn online interactions into opportunities for teamwork, leadership, and participation within their campus organizations. Conversely, high social media usage without

communication competence often leads to passive engagement—students may consume content but rarely contribute actively in organizational contexts.

The findings also support McCroskey's (1997) theory of communication competence, which emphasizes that effective communication involves not only knowledge but also behavioral skills in interpersonal contexts. Students who can express their ideas clearly, listen actively, and empathize with others are more likely to engage meaningfully in group discussions, decision-making, and organizational activities. This explains why communication ability is a stronger predictor of engagement than social media activity alone.

In addition, the demographic profile of respondents dominated by individuals aged 18–25 years corresponds with Erikson's (1968) psychosocial stage of early adulthood, characterized by the need for social connection and identity formation. During this stage, social media often becomes a tool for self-expression and networking, but real satisfaction and growth occur when these connections are transformed into authentic participation and contribution within organizations.

Furthermore, the higher percentage of female respondents (57.5%) provides additional insight. Research by Tannen (1990) and Valkenburg & Peter (2011) indicates that women are generally more relational and expressive in their communication style, which may explain their stronger association between communication ability and engagement. Female students tend to use communication as a means to build trust, maintain relationships, and collaborate, which are essential aspects of organizational participation.

Overall, the results highlight that social media acts as a facilitating platform, while communication ability serves as the driving force behind student engagement. In other words, social media provides access to networks and information, but without effective communication, it cannot foster real engagement or participation. Therefore, communication competence functions as a bridge that connects virtual involvement to real-world organizational activity.

From a practical standpoint, these findings imply that universities and student organizations should not only promote digital literacy but also focus on developing students' communication and interpersonal skills. Programs such as communication workshops, leadership training, and social media management for organizational purposes can strengthen students' ability to engage meaningfully both online and offline. Enhancing these skills will contribute to creating more active, collaborative, and socially responsible students within the university community.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that communication ability functions as a mediating factor that transforms online engagement into real organizational participation. Students with higher communication competence are more capable of expressing ideas, working in teams, and building relationships, which leads to stronger engagement in campus organizations. In contrast, social media activity without effective communication skills tends to create passive involvement rather than active participation.

Furthermore, demographic aspects such as age (18–25 years) and the higher proportion of female respondents support the idea that communication and relational tendencies significantly influence engagement behavior. This suggests that student engagement is not only a matter of digital presence but also a social and communicative process shaped by interpersonal competence.

In practical terms, educational institutions should design programs that integrate digital literacy with communication training. By improving students' ability to communicate effectively and use social media responsibly, universities can foster more meaningful engagement, strengthen participation in student organizations, and develop graduates who are not only digitally active but also socially competent and collaborative in real-world contexts.

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