



From screens to the soul: The role of TikTok digital media and self-concept in the psychological well-being of students

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ABSTRACT

Background: The development of digital media, particularly short-video-based platforms such as TikTok, has transformed patterns of social interaction and the ways in which university students express their identities. This phenomenon raises questions regarding the extent to which TikTok usage influences students' psychological well-being, particularly when associated with internal factors such as self-concept. **Method:** This study aimed to analyze the influence of TikTok usage intensity and self-concept on the psychological well-being of students at Universitas Islam 45 Bekasi. The study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The participants consisted of 53 university students selected through purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using three psychological scales: the TikTok usage intensity scale, the self-concept scale adapted from Goñi (2011), and the psychological well-being scale based on Ryff's six dimensions (1989). Data analysis was conducted using Spearman correlation tests and multiple linear regression analysis. **Findings:** The findings revealed that TikTok usage intensity was significantly negatively associated with psychological well-being ($r = -0.320$, $p = 0.020$), whereas self-concept demonstrated a significant positive relationship with psychological well-being ($r = 0.445$, $p = 0.001$). Multiple regression analysis further indicated that self-concept emerged as the strongest predictor of psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.434$, $p = 0.001$), while TikTok usage intensity also significantly predicted psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.262$, $p = 0.035$), although its contribution was weaker. These findings indicate that internal factors such as self-concept play a more substantial role in determining psychological well-being than external factors in the form of social media engagement. **Conclusion:** This study concludes that both TikTok usage intensity and self-concept significantly contribute to students' psychological well-being; however, self-concept exerts a stronger influence, suggesting that positive self-perception and self-acceptance are important protective factors in maintaining psychological well-being in the digital era. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** The novelty of this study lies in the integration of internal psychological factors (self-concept) and external digital communication factors (TikTok usage intensity) in explaining students' psychological well-being within the context of short-video-based social media platforms.

KEYWORDS: psychological well-being; self-concept; TikTok social media.

1. Introduction

University students constitute a group of individuals who are in a transitional phase toward early adulthood, during which they face various academic, social, and personal demands simultaneously. According to Hulukati & Djibrán (2018), university students are individuals who pursue education at higher education institutions, whether public universities, private institutions, or other equivalent educational establishments. University

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students are considered to possess a high level of intellectuality, the ability to think critically, and well-structured planning in their actions. The capacity for critical thinking as well as acting quickly and appropriately becomes an inherent characteristic of university students, as these two aspects are complementary principles. At this stage, students strive to build self-identity, achieve emotional independence, and discover direction and meaning in life. This developmental phase makes students vulnerable to various psychological pressures that may affect their mental well-being and their ability to adapt to both social and academic environments. Therefore, psychological well-being becomes an important aspect that determines how students live their daily lives in a healthy and productive manner.

Ryff states that psychological well-being functions as a factor capable of predicting an individual's physical and mental health conditions, thereby enhancing feelings of happiness in carrying out daily activities. Psychological well-being can also encourage individuals to behave positively in efforts to achieve goals, face various life challenges, and develop their potential (Oktavianaa & Riskianab, 2023). Meanwhile, according to Lestari et al. (2024), psychological well-being is viewed as a form of positive individual functioning and reflects the quality of life possessed by the individual. Psychological well-being, as proposed by Ryff (1989), encompasses six main dimensions, namely self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Within the context of student life, psychological well-being plays an important role in maintaining emotional stability, enhancing academic motivation, and supporting personal achievement. Conversely, low levels of psychological well-being may result in stress, anxiety, and declining academic performance.

One of the internal factors that plays an important role in psychological well-being is self-concept. Hurlock (1975) explains that self-concept refers to an individual's perception of themselves, formed through a combination of physical, psychological, emotional beliefs, aspirations, and achievements to be attained (Saefullah & Lailiyah, 2021). Meanwhile, according to Rahmawati & Mudhar (2025), self-concept is the way individuals perceive themselves, encompassing physical, social, and psychological aspects that develop through various experiences and interactions with the surrounding environment. According to Goñi et al. (2011), self-concept includes four primary dimensions, namely self-fulfillment, emotional self-concept, honesty, and autonomy. Individuals with a positive self-concept tend to recognize their potentials and limitations realistically, behave honestly toward themselves, and possess independence in determining life decisions. In contrast, individuals with a negative self-concept are more easily influenced by external validation, such as the number of likes and comments on social media. Research by Gavín-Chocano et al. (2025) indicates that students with high levels of self-fulfillment and autonomy possess better psychological well-being and lower stress levels. Palacios et al. (2015) also reinforced these findings by stating that the four dimensions of self-concept proposed by Goñi serve as significant predictors of psychological well-being among adolescents and university students.

In the digital era, the development of information technology has influenced the way students express themselves and shape their personal identities. One prominent phenomenon is the increasing use of short-video-based social media platforms such as TikTok. This platform enables students to display their self-identity through various forms of creative expression ranging from dance, lip-syncing, to educational content presented in a light and engaging manner. TikTok is now not only a means of entertainment but also a medium for self-image formation and social validation (Zhang, 2022). Meanwhile, according to Putra (2018), TikTok is an application that provides various unique and interesting special effects, making it easy and practical to use. Users can create short videos with attractive results to be shared with friends and other users. This short-video-based application also offers a wide range of music options that support users in presenting dances, freestyle performances, and various other types of content (Polgan et al., 2023).

According to Bilali et al. (2025), intensive TikTok usage has two sides: It can enhance social connection and self-expression, yet it may also generate anxiety and emotional

exhaustion due to pressure to appear perfect. In the context of university students, excessive usage has the potential to shift the focus of self-development toward seeking external recognition, which ultimately affects psychological well-being. As stated in the study by Rohmatillah et al. (2024), high dependency on social media may result in negative impacts such as social isolation, difficulties in dealing with conflicts face-to-face, and feelings of alienation in the real world. Adolescents are also likely to experience pressure and be influenced by unrealistic social standards from social media content, which may ultimately increase their levels of anxiety.

Puspitasari & Sakti (2019) explain that the intensity of social media use consists of two main aspects: Frequency of use and duration of users' engagement with the platform. The higher the intensity of usage, the greater the possibility of psychological impacts, both positive and negative. Findings by Yang et al. (2021) indicate that the intensity of video-based social media usage has a significant correlation with life satisfaction and the psychological condition of young users. This is in line with the findings of Rizaldi & Muhid (2024), which state that excessive and uncontrolled use of social media may lead to various psychological disturbances, such as depression, anxiety, and the emergence of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon. This means that the level of digital engagement may influence how individuals perceive themselves and the well-being they experience.

Contemporary digital communication research suggests that social media users actively construct and negotiate their identities through continuous interaction with digital platforms. The content users consume, create, and receive feedback on may influence self-perceptions and psychological evaluations of the self. Therefore, understanding students' psychological well-being requires not only examining individual psychological characteristics but also considering the digital communication environment in which identity formation occurs. TikTok, with its highly personalized algorithmic structure, provides a particularly relevant context for investigating the relationship between digital engagement, self-concept, and psychological well-being.

Despite the growing body of literature, an important research gap remains. Previous studies have predominantly examined either the relationship between social media use and psychological well-being or the relationship between self-concept and psychological well-being independently. While these studies provide valuable insights, limited attention has been given to understanding how digital media engagement and internal psychological factors interact simultaneously in influencing students' psychological well-being. Moreover, most studies have approached this issue primarily from a psychological perspective, with less emphasis on how digital communication environments, platform dynamics, digital identity construction, and algorithmic influence may contribute to psychological outcomes. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge psychological and digital communication perspectives by examining the relationships among TikTok usage intensity, self-concept, and psychological well-being among university students.

Based on the theoretical framework and previous empirical findings, this study assumes that TikTok usage intensity and self-concept are associated with students' psychological well-being. Self-concept is expected to contribute positively to psychological well-being by shaping how individuals evaluate and accept themselves. Meanwhile, TikTok usage intensity may influence psychological well-being depending on patterns of engagement, content consumption, and individual interpretation of digital experiences. Thus, this study emphasizes the interconnected relationship between digital media use, self-concept, and psychological well-being among university students in the digital era.

This study is entitled "From screens to the soul: The role of TikTok digital media and self-concept on psychological well-being among university students". The study is expected to contribute to both psychological and digital communication literature by providing a deeper understanding of how interactions within algorithm-driven social media environments relate to self-concept and psychological well-being among university students. Furthermore, the findings may offer valuable insights into digital identity formation, online engagement patterns, and the broader implications of social media use in contemporary society.

2. Methods

2.1 Research subjects and sampling technique employed

This study involved 53 students from Universitas Islam 45 Bekasi representing various study programs as participants. The sample was selected based on specific inclusion criteria relevant to the objectives of the study. Although the sample size was relatively limited, it was considered adequate to examine the relationships among the study variables using multiple linear regression analysis. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted with caution, as the relatively small sample size may limit the generalizability of the results to a broader student population.

The inclusion criteria employed included active students at Universitas Islam 45 Bekasi, both male and female, aged between 18 and 25 years, and possessing an actively used TikTok account. Prior to participation, prospective respondents were provided with an explanation regarding the purpose, benefits, and stages of the study, and were subsequently asked to voluntarily express their willingness to participate. Based on these considerations, this study employed a purposive sampling technique, namely a sampling method conducted intentionally based on specific criteria relevant to the objectives of the research. This technique was considered the most appropriate for obtaining data from respondents with the specific characteristics required (Sulistiyowati, 2017). Through the use of this method, researchers were able to collect information that was more accurate, relevant, and in-depth from subjects who fulfilled the research requirements.

2.2 Data collection techniques and research instruments

The data collection technique in this study was conducted using instruments in the form of psychological scales. According to Azwar (2021), a psychological scale is a measurement instrument designed to assess individuals' psychological attributes or characteristics, such as attitudes, personality, and certain behavioral tendencies that cannot be directly observed. The type of scale employed in this study was the Likert scale, namely a measurement instrument used to assess the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of individuals or groups toward a particular object or phenomenon (Nafisatur, 2024).

In its implementation, this study utilized three main types of instruments. First, the self-concept scale adapted from the Personal Self-concept Questionnaire developed by Goñi (2011). This scale consisted of 18 statement items used to measure individuals' perceptions of themselves across various aspects of life. Second, the psychological well-being scale was developed based on the six dimensions of psychological well-being proposed by Ryff (1995), namely self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. This scale consisted of 18 items representing each of these dimensions. Third, to assess the intensity of TikTok social media usage, the Social Media Usage Intensity Scale (SIPMS) developed by Sabekti (2019) was employed. This instrument consisted of 25 statement items reflecting the frequency, duration, and level of individual involvement in using the TikTok platform. Each statement within the three scales was measured using a Likert scale ranging from scores 1 to 4. A score of 1 indicated a "strongly disagree" response, whereas a score of 4 indicated a "strongly agree" response. The use of this scale enabled researchers to obtain quantitative data capable of describing the intensity of respondents' attitudes, perceptions, or viewpoints toward the statements provided.

In the process of item construction, each scale contained two types of statements, namely favorable (positive) statements and unfavorable (negative) statements. Favorable items reflected a positive direction toward the psychological attribute being measured, such that the higher the score assigned by respondents, the higher the level of the attribute possessed. Conversely, unfavorable items reflected the opposite direction, whereby higher scores indicated lower levels of the attribute. To maintain consistency and accuracy in assessment, unfavorable items were assigned reverse scores, in which a score of 1 was

converted into 4, a score of 2 into 3, a score of 3 into 2, and a score of 4 into 1. The implementation of this reverse scoring system was intended to ensure that the interpretation of measurement results remained consistent and accurately reflected the actual level of psychological attributes possessed by respondents.

2.3 Data analysis techniques

In this study, the data analysis process was conducted through several stages beginning with classical assumption testing before proceeding to the analysis of relationships among variables. This stage was important to ensure that the independent variables could truly function as predictors without generating bias toward the dependent variable.

The first step was the normality test, which aimed to determine whether the residual values of the regression model possessed a distribution approximating normality. A normal distribution constitutes one of the prerequisites for statistical analysis results to be interpreted accurately. In this study, normality testing was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk test, as this method is considered more sensitive in detecting deviations from normal distribution, particularly in relatively small sample sizes. The next stage was the linearity test, which functioned to ensure that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables was linear. A linear relationship indicates that every change in the independent variable is followed by a proportional change in the dependent variable. The results of these two tests served as the basis for determining the type of analytical technique to be employed, whether categorized as parametric or nonparametric.

Based on the results of the assumption tests conducted, correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationships among the study variables. Correlation analysis is a statistical technique used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between variables (Wulansari & Affandi, 2024). The selection of the correlation technique was adjusted to the characteristics and distribution of the data obtained from respondents. If the data fulfilled the assumptions required for parametric analysis, Pearson Product Moment correlation was employed because it is suitable for interval-scale data and variables originating from the same population. Conversely, if the assumptions were not fully satisfied, Spearman's rho correlation could be utilized as an alternative nonparametric technique to measure the degree of association between variables (Utami & Wideasavitri, 2013).

Furthermore, to examine the influence of TikTok usage intensity and self-concept on psychological well-being, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. This technique enables researchers to assess the individual and simultaneous contributions of the independent variables in predicting the dependent variable (Azwar, 2023). In regression analysis, psychological well-being functioned as the dependent variable, whereas TikTok usage intensity and self-concept served as the independent variables (Husdi & Dalai, 2023).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

This study was conducted at Universitas Islam 45 Bekasi by involving active students from various study programs who were within the early adulthood age range. The respondents who participated were predominantly female students from Regular Class A, with the majority originating from the Psychology Study Program. Data collection was carried out using a Likert-scale-based questionnaire designed to measure the three main variables in this study, namely the use of TikTok digital media, self-concept, and psychological well-being. Each instrument was developed to represent the principal aspects of each variable so that the measurement results could comprehensively describe the psychological condition of the respondents. Furthermore, to determine the extent to which the independent variables influenced the dependent variable, an analysis process was conducted on the collected data. The results of the statistical testing were subsequently

presented in the following table to illustrate the relationships among variables as well as their level of significance toward the formulated research model.

3.1.1 Demographic data

Based on the results of the demographic data analysis, it was found that the majority of respondents in this study were female, accounting for 88.7%, while male respondents constituted only 11.3%. These findings indicate that participation in the study was dominated by female students. This condition may suggest a tendency for women to be more active in using social media, particularly TikTok, whether as a means of entertainment, self-expression, or for obtaining information and social interaction.

Table 1. Demographic information

Demographic Information	Total (%)
Gender	
Male	11.3%
Female	88.7%
Age	
< 19 Years	16.9%
20 Years	11.3%
21 Years	30.1%
> 22 Years	41.7%
Department/Study Program	
Psychology	77.5%
Islamic Religious Education	5.6%
Government Science	7.5%
Accounting	9.4%
Regular Class	
A	92.6%
B	1.9%
C	5.6%
Reasons for Using TikTok	
Seeking Information	47.2%
Emotional Coping	39.6%
Self-Expression	9.4%
Following Peers	3.8%
Duration of TikTok Usage	
< 10 Minutes	13.2%
15–30 Minutes	34%
45–60 Minutes	20.8%
> 60 Minutes	32.1%
Frequency of TikTok Usage	
Once a Day	7.4%
2–3 Times a Day	33.3%
4–5 Times a Day	33.3%
> 6 Times a Day	25.9%

When viewed from the age category, the majority of respondents were within the age range above 22 years (41.7%) and 21 years old (30.1%). Meanwhile, the age groups below 19 years (16.9%) and 20 years old (11.3%) showed relatively smaller proportions. Based on this distribution, it can be concluded that most TikTok users who became respondents were university students or individuals in the early adulthood phase, namely an age group recognized for having a high level of activity in the use of digital technology and social media.

From the distribution based on study programs, it was found that the majority of respondents originated from the Psychology Department, accounting for 77.5%. Meanwhile, respondents from the Accounting Study Program constituted 9.4%, followed by Government Science at 7.5%, and Islamic Religious Education at 5.6%. The dominance of psychology students indicates that this study was most likely conducted within the scope of

the Faculty of Psychology or that psychology students possess greater interest in research themes related to social media user behavior. This finding is consistent with the characteristics of psychology students, who generally demonstrate a high level of concern toward behavioral aspects and the dynamics of digital media usage. Furthermore, when reviewed from the perspective of class categories, the majority of respondents originated from Regular Class A, with a percentage reaching 92.6%. Meanwhile, students from Class B accounted for only 1.9%, and those from Class C represented 5.6%. This condition indicates that the research sample possessed a relatively high degree of homogeneity, with a dominant concentration within one class group.

Based on the identification results regarding the reasons for using TikTok, it was found that most respondents used the platform to seek information (47.2%) and as a form of emotional coping (39.6%), namely individuals' efforts to manage, soothe, or channel emotions through activities on social media. A smaller proportion of respondents used TikTok for self-expression (9.4%) and to follow trends and peer activities (3.8%). These findings indicate that TikTok functions not only as a medium of entertainment but has also evolved into a platform for information seeking as well as a medium for emotional regulation. From the aspect of usage intensity, it was found that 34% of respondents used TikTok for 15–30 minutes per day, 20.8% for 45–60 minutes, and 32.1% used it for more than 60 minutes daily. Only 13.2% of respondents reported using TikTok for less than 10 minutes per day. These findings indicate that the majority of respondents spent more than 15 minutes per day accessing TikTok, suggesting that the application has become part of their daily routine. Furthermore, in terms of usage frequency, 33.3% of respondents accessed TikTok 2–3 times a day, another 33.3% accessed it 4–5 times a day, and 25.9% of respondents even used it more than 6 times per day. Only 7.4% admitted to using TikTok once a day. These data indicate a relatively high level of engagement between respondents and the platform, which may reflect the digital behavioral patterns of today's younger generation.

Overall, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents in this study were female university students aged 21 years and above from the Psychology Study Program in Regular Class A. They demonstrated high intensity and frequency of TikTok usage, with the primary motivations being information seeking and as a means of emotional release or regulation. These findings illustrate that TikTok plays a dual role for young users, namely as an information medium as well as a tool for emotional coping in everyday life.

3.1.2 Descriptive test results

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to provide an overview of respondents' scores on the variables of TikTok usage intensity, self-concept, and psychological well-being. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis are presented in Table 2, including minimum scores, maximum scores, mean values, standard deviations, and score categorizations for each research variable.

As presented in Table 2, the majority of respondents (66.03%) were categorized as having a moderate level of psychological well-being. Meanwhile, 18.86% were classified in the low category and 15.09% in the high category. These findings suggest that most students demonstrated an adequate level of psychological well-being, although variations among respondents were still evident. For the TikTok social media variable, the measurement results revealed that out of 53 respondents, 6 individuals (11.33%) were categorized as low, 40 individuals (75.47%) were within the moderate category, and 7 individuals (13.20%) were categorized as high. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of students used TikTok with moderate intensity.

Table 2. Descriptive testing

Variable	Min Score	Max Score	Mean	SD	Categorization					
					Low	Total	Moderat	Total	High	Total
Psychologi cal well- being (Y)	32	52	42.42	4.8 0	< 37.61	18.8 %	37.61- 47.22	66.03 %	> 47.22	15.09 %
TikTok Social Media (X1)	56	74	64.92	3.0 0	< 61.91	11.3 %	61.91- 67.92	75.4 %	> 67.92	13.20 %
Self- concept (X2)	31	63	48.26	7.9 1	< 40.34	19.9 %	40.34- 56.17	66.0 %	> 56.17	16.98 %

Furthermore, the results of the analysis of the self-concept variable indicated that out of a total of 53 respondents, 11 individuals (19.99%) were classified within the low category, 35 individuals (66.03%) were within the moderate category, and 7 individuals (16.98%) were categorized as high. These findings confirm that the majority of students possessed a moderate level of self-concept, reflecting the presence of positive self-perceptions, although further reinforcement remains necessary for certain individuals in order to achieve a more optimal level of self-concept.

3.1.3 Assumption testing results

As presented in Table 3, the shapiro-wilk normality test was conducted to determine whether the data were normally distributed. A variable is considered normally distributed when the significance value exceeds 0.05. The results showed that the psychological well-being variable obtained a significance value of 0.023 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the data were not normally distributed. Meanwhile, the TikTok Social Media variable ($p = 0.200$) and the self-concept variable ($p = 0.200$) demonstrated significance values greater than 0.05, indicating that both variables were normally distributed.

Table 3. Normality test p-value of shapiro-wilk

Variable	Statistic	df	sig
Psychological well-being	0.101	53	0.023
TikTok Social Media	0.131	53	0.200
Self Concept	0.097	53	0.200

Therefore, based on the results presented in Table 3, only the psychological well-being variable did not meet the assumption of normality, whereas the TikTok social media and self-concept variables were normally distributed. These findings were subsequently considered together with the linearity test results in determining the most appropriate statistical analysis technique. Thus, it can be concluded that among the three variables tested, only the psychological well-being variable did not satisfy the assumption of normality, whereas both TikTok digital media and self-concept demonstrated normally distributed data.

3.1.4 Linearity test results

Based on the results presented in Table 4, the TikTok social media variable obtained an F value of 1.431 with p -value = 0.197 ($p > 0.05$). These findings indicate that the TikTok social media variable possesses a linear relationship with the psychological well-being variable. Furthermore, for the self-concept variable, an F value of 2.161 with p -value = 0.027

($p < 0.05$) was obtained, indicating a deviation from linearity between self-concept and psychological well-being.

Table 4. Linearity test anova table

Variable	Deviation linearity (p-value = 0.05)	
	F	sig
Psychological well-being* TikTok Social Media	1.431	0.197
Psychological well-being* Self-Concept	2.161	0.027

Nevertheless, based on the overall results of the assumption tests conducted previously, it was found that the research data did not entirely satisfy the assumption of normal distribution and did not fully demonstrate linear relationships among the variable components. Therefore, data analysis in this study was conducted using a nonparametric inferential statistical approach. This approach was selected to accommodate the characteristics of the data, which were not normally distributed, thereby ensuring that the analysis results remained valid and reliable. Based on these findings, Spearman's rho correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationships among the research variables. In the subsequent stage, the analysis focused on identifying and examining the extent to which the TikTok social media and self-concept variables influenced the psychological well-being of the research respondents.

3.1.5 Hypothesis testing results

In hypothesis testing using correlation analysis, the relationship between variables is considered significant (H_a accepted) if the p-value is less than 0.05. Conversely, if the p-value exceeds 0.05, the relationship is considered non-significant (H_a rejected). Based on the analysis results presented in Table 5, the TikTok social media variable in relation to psychological well-being obtained a value of $r = -0.320$ with $p = 0.020$ ($p < 0.05$). Meanwhile, the self-concept variable in relation to psychological well-being obtained a value of $r = 0.445$ with $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5. Correlation test

Variables	Spearman's rho Correlation Coefficient	Sig.	Description
TikTok Social Media * Psychological well-being	-0.320	0.020	There is a significant negative relationship between TikTok Social Media and Psychological well-being
Self-concept * Psychological well-being	0.445	0.001	There is a significant positive relationship between Self-concept and Psychological well-being

These findings indicate that both TikTok social media usage and self-concept demonstrated significant relationships with psychological well-being (H_a accepted). TikTok social media usage showed a significant negative relationship with psychological well-being, indicating that higher levels of TikTok usage tended to be associated with lower levels of psychological well-being. In contrast, self-concept demonstrated a significant positive relationship with psychological well-being, indicating that students with a more positive self-concept tended to report higher levels of psychological well-being.

Thus, the findings of this study indicate that both TikTok social media usage and self-concept were significantly associated with psychological well-being. However, self-concept demonstrated a stronger relationship with psychological well-being than TikTok social

media usage. Based on these findings, the study proceeded with a simple regression test to further examine the influence of the independent variables on psychological well-being.

3.1.6 Multiple regression analysis test results

Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis presented in Table 6, the overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 9.154$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that TikTok social media usage and self-concept simultaneously contributed to the prediction of psychological well-being among university students. The model produced a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.518$, indicating a moderate relationship between the independent variables and psychological well-being.

Table 6. Multiple regression

Model	β		Sig
Constant	82.320		0.000
TikTok Social Media Usage	-0.262		0.035
Self-Concept	0.434		0.001
F		9.154	0.000
Df regression		2	
Df residual		50	
R		0.518	
R square (R^2)		0.268	
Adjust R^2		0.239	

Furthermore, the coefficient of determination showed that the model explained 26.8% of the variance in psychological well-being ($R^2 = 0.268$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.239$). This result suggests that approximately 26.8% of the variation in students' psychological well-being can be explained by TikTok social media usage and self-concept, while the remaining 73.2% may be influenced by other factors not examined in the present study, such as social support, emotional regulation, family environment, academic demands, and other psychological variables. The regression coefficient analysis also revealed that TikTok social media usage significantly predicted psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.262$, $p = 0.035$). In addition, self-concept was also found to be a significant predictor of psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.434$, $p = 0.001$). Compared to TikTok social media usage, self-concept demonstrated a stronger contribution to the regression model, as indicated by its larger standardized coefficient value.

Overall, the findings indicate that both TikTok social media usage and self-concept significantly contributed to psychological well-being among university students. As shown in Table 6, self-concept emerged as the stronger predictor, suggesting that students with more positive perceptions of themselves tend to experience better psychological well-being.

3.2 Discussion

The results of the research analysis indicate that both self-concept and TikTok social media usage significantly influence students' psychological well-being. However, self-concept emerged as the stronger predictor, indicating that internal psychological factors play a more dominant role in explaining students' well-being compared to digital media usage alone. These findings suggest that psychological well-being is shaped by the interaction between intrapersonal characteristics and digital media engagement.

Theoretically, these findings are consistent with the psychological well-being model proposed by Ryff (1989), which explains that psychological well-being consists of six

primary dimensions, namely self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Individuals with a positive self-concept tend to be more capable of actualizing these six aspects because they possess the ability to evaluate themselves realistically, make decisions independently, and interpret life experiences constructively. Within the context of student life, these abilities play an important role in maintaining emotional stability and adapting to academic demands and complex social pressures.

These findings are also consistent with the research conducted by Goñi et al. (2011), which explains that self-concept is formed through four primary dimensions, namely self-fulfillment, emotional self-concept, honesty, and autonomy, all of which contribute to the enhancement of psychological well-being. In subsequent research, Palacios et al. (2015) emphasized that self-concept functions as an important predictor of life satisfaction and psychological well-being among adolescents and young adults. Students with strong self-concept generally possess mature self-reflection, emotional stability, and are less easily influenced by social standards shaped through digital media. In contrast, individuals with low self-concept are more vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and declining well-being because they tend to evaluate themselves negatively and rely on external validation.

The findings of this study are further reinforced by the research of Kim & Lee (2025), which demonstrated that high levels of self-esteem function as a strong moderator in the relationship between social media use and subjective well-being among women in their twenties. Users with healthy self-esteem are more capable of resisting the negative impacts of intensive social media use. Meanwhile, Anindya (2022) and Oktafiani et al. (2024) also strengthen these findings by stating that self-concept significantly influences students' psychological well-being. Individuals who understand and accept themselves well tend to possess more meaningful lives, greater gratitude, and better emotional balance.

Furthermore, the conceptual approach proposed by Lee & Hancock (2023) in the article entitled "Social Media Mindsets" provides a new understanding regarding the relationship between perceptions of digital self-control and psychological well-being. In their study, they explained that individuals' beliefs regarding their ability to control social media usage, as well as their perceptions of social media as either an enriching tool or a harmful medium, possess a strong correlation with levels of psychological well-being. Individuals who feel that they have control over their digital activities and perceive social media as a positive medium for learning, self-exploration, or meaningful social connection tend to possess higher levels of psychological well-being compared to those who feel controlled by the medium itself. In other words, the way individuals interpret their digital interactions becomes an important predictor in determining their mental well-being.

The findings of this study indicate that TikTok social media usage significantly predicts psychological well-being, although its contribution is weaker than that of self-concept. This finding suggests that the influence of TikTok is not merely determined by the frequency or duration of use but is also shaped by how students interact with the platform, interpret digital content, and manage their online experiences. While previous studies have reported that excessive TikTok use may be associated with anxiety, sleep disturbances, and reduced concentration (Carpenter, 2023; Bilali et al., 2025), the present findings suggest that the psychological effects of TikTok may vary depending on users' motivations, engagement patterns, and individual psychological characteristics.

Based on the data obtained in this study, the majority of respondents utilized TikTok as a means of seeking information (47.2%) and as a medium for emotional regulation (emotional coping) at 39.6%. Therefore, the pattern of TikTok usage among students in this study was adaptive and functional rather than compulsive. This condition contributed to the absence of significant negative effects on psychological well-being. On the contrary, usage directed toward informative and regulatory purposes may produce positive psychological effects in the form of stress reduction and mood enhancement.

From a digital communication perspective, TikTok can be viewed as a platform that facilitates identity construction, self-presentation, and social interaction through algorithmically curated content. The platform's affordances enable users to create, share,

and consume content while receiving immediate feedback from online audiences. As a result, the influence of TikTok on psychological well-being may not depend solely on usage intensity but also on the quality of interactions, the nature of consumed content, and the meanings users attach to their digital experiences. This perspective helps explain why TikTok usage may contribute differently to students' well-being depending on their motivations and patterns of engagement.

Nevertheless, these findings do not negate other studies, such as the research conducted by Cahya & Ningsih (2023) which demonstrated that excessive social media use may trigger depressive symptoms and even thoughts of ending one's life. The study found that adolescents (14.8%) possessed a higher risk of experiencing depression compared to adults (8.4%). This can be understood because adolescence is a developmental phase characterized by emotional instability and the search for self-identity, such that intensive exposure to social media may increase vulnerability to psychological pressure. In the context of this study, the majority of respondents were in the early adulthood stage, during which mechanisms of self-control and emotional regulation are relatively mature, resulting in TikTok usage that is more conscious and purposeful.

The findings of this study are also consistent with the meta-analysis conducted by Liu et al. (2024), which states that the impact of social media on the mental health of young people and adolescents depends greatly on the context and orientation of its usage. When social media is utilized as a means of learning, self-development, or positive expression, its effects may be constructive. However, when used passively merely to observe or compare oneself with others, social media may instead reduce self-esteem and increase the risk of psychological disturbances.

The integration of all these findings demonstrates that internal factors such as positive self-concept, self-efficacy, and digital self-regulation possess highly important protective roles in maintaining students' psychological well-being in the digital era. Students with strong self-concept and high self-efficacy are capable of utilizing social media, including TikTok, as a space for self-expression, knowledge exploration, and creativity development. In contrast, individuals with negative self-concept tend to use social media to seek external validation, which ultimately triggers social comparison, self-dissatisfaction, and declining psychological well-being. Thus, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of social media usage in relation to psychological well-being is determined more by individuals' internal conditions than by external factors such as frequency or duration of use.

These findings also contribute to digital media scholarship by demonstrating that social media platforms do not uniformly influence users' psychological outcomes. Rather, the effects of digital platforms are mediated by individual characteristics, perceptions, and patterns of engagement. This supports contemporary communication perspectives emphasizing that users are active participants who negotiate meanings, identities, and experiences within digital environments instead of being passive recipients of media effects. Conceptually, the findings of this study strengthen the argument that students' psychological well-being in the digital era is not solely influenced by the intensity of social media usage, but is more strongly determined by internal intrapersonal factors such as self-concept, self-efficacy, and media usage orientation. When individuals possess healthy self-perceptions, good emotional control, and clear objectives in interacting with digital media, social media may become a space that enriches psychological experiences and supports self-development. Conversely, when individuals possess fragile self-concepts and tend to seek social validation, social media may instead reinforce insecurity and reduce psychological well-being. Therefore, the findings highlight the importance of integrating psychological and digital communication perspectives when examining the impact of social media on young people's well-being in contemporary digital society.

Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the interaction between internal and external factors becomes the key to maintaining students' psychological well-being amid the rapid flow of digitalization and increasingly intensive social media exposure. In this context, building a positive self-concept and strengthening digital self-regulation capacity emerge as

crucial strategic steps to ensure that students do not merely become social media users, but also become empowered, reflective, and psychologically well individuals.

4. Conclusions

This study found that TikTok social media usage was significantly and negatively associated with psychological well-being among university students ($r = -0.320$, $p = 0.020$), whereas self-concept showed a significant positive association with psychological well-being ($r = 0.445$, $p = 0.001$). Multiple regression analysis further indicated that both variables significantly predicted psychological well-being, with self-concept showing a stronger contribution ($\beta = 0.434$, $p = 0.001$) than TikTok usage ($\beta = -0.262$, $p = 0.035$). The regression model explained 26.8% of the variance in psychological well-being ($R^2 = 0.268$). These findings highlight the importance of self-concept in understanding students' psychological well-being while suggesting that higher TikTok usage may be associated with lower well-being. However, the findings should be interpreted cautiously because of the relatively small sample size and the limited generalizability of the results.

The limitation of this study lies in the relatively small number of subjects, such that the findings may not fully represent the overall student population. With a limited number of respondents, the generalization of the research findings must be conducted cautiously, as broader variations in individual characteristics may not have been entirely represented. This limitation may also affect the accuracy of the analysis concerning the relationship between the intensity of TikTok usage, self-concept, and psychological well-being. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve a larger and more diverse number of subjects in order to produce findings that are more representative and valid.

Based on the limitations of this study, it is recommended that future research involve a larger and more diverse number of subjects, both in terms of age, study program, and social background, so that the findings obtained may be more representative and generalizable to the broader student population. Future studies should also consider employing more diverse methods, such as a combination of questionnaires, in-depth interviews, or observations, in order to obtain richer and more detailed data regarding the relationship between the intensity of TikTok usage, self-concept, and psychological well-being. In addition, it is recommended to examine additional factors that may influence students' psychological well-being, such as social support, academic stress, or environmental conditions, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' psychological dynamics in the digital era as well as the role of social media in shaping identity and psychological well-being.

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