

The Impact of PKM in Increasing Public Awareness of Mental Health in the Digital Era

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Abstract

The development of digital technology, especially social media, has changed the way individuals interact and access information, but it has also had a negative impact on mental health. Excessive use of social media is associated with an increased risk of depression, anxiety, and decreased self-esteem, especially among adolescents and young adults. In addition, gadget addiction and the phenomenon of social comparison worsen an individual's psychological condition. On the other hand, the low level of public understanding of mental health is a major challenge in efforts to prevent and treat psychological disorders. Many individuals still consider mental health problems as taboo or personal weaknesses, which prevents them from seeking help. The Student Creativity Program (PKM) can play an important role in addressing this issue by increasing public awareness through community-based education, which can be done through various digital media and interactive activities. PKM allows students to design educational programs that are socially and culturally relevant, as well as increasing mental health literacy in the community. In the context of rapidly developing digitalization, the use of technology in PKM can expand the reach of mental health education in a more interesting and effective way. Therefore, PKM has the potential to reduce the stigma of mental health and promote psychological well-being in the community.

Keywords: Digitalization; Mental-Health; PKM

1. Introduction

The development of digital technology has changed the way individuals interact and access information, but behind this convenience comes serious consequences for mental health. Studies show that excessive use of social media is correlated with an increased risk of depression, anxiety, and decreased self-esteem, especially among adolescents and young adults (Paramartha et al., 2024). Fake digital interactions tend to replace real social interactions, creating feelings of loneliness and social isolation that worsen an individual's psychological condition. In addition, exposure to idealistic and



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stressful content on social media causes the phenomenon of social comparison which leads to stress and dissatisfaction with oneself.

Gadget addiction is also a significant issue in the digital era. According to a report from the Journal of Behavioral Addictions, compulsive smartphone use can affect emotional regulation and reduce an individual's ability to manage stress (Pratiwi & Hernawati, 2025). This is exacerbated by the habit of digital multitasking which reduces the quality of focus and accelerates mental fatigue. Dependence on digital devices not only impacts the mental health of individuals but also reduces the quality of social relationships in the surrounding environment. Therefore, it is important to highlight the negative impact of digitalization on mental health as a crucial issue that needs to be addressed through appropriate educational interventions, including through programs such as PKM which aim to build collective awareness in society.

The low level of public understanding of mental health is a serious challenge in efforts to prevent and treat psychological disorders. Many individuals still consider mental health issues as taboo or associated with personal weaknesses, not as a medical condition that requires serious attention. According to Silalahi et al (2024), the stigma against people with mental disorders is a major obstacle to seeking professional help, especially in developing countries, including Indonesia. This condition causes many people with mental disorders to be reluctant to access health services or even not realize that they need help, thus worsening their condition progressively.

Furthermore, ignorance of the early signs of mental disorders, such as extreme mood swings, sleep disturbances, or withdrawal from social interactions, is often ignored by individuals and their surroundings. This indicates a gap in mental health literacy at the community level. Research by Darfin et al (2021) states that most Indonesians still have limited understanding of the comprehensive concept of mental health, including prevention, early detection, and treatment. Therefore, a systematic and structured approach is needed in building public awareness and knowledge, one of which is through the involvement of educational programs such as the Student Creativity Program (PKM) which can reach communities directly and adaptively.

In this context, the Student Creativity Program (PKM) has a strategic role as a bridge between the academic world and the social reality of society. Through a research-based and innovation-based approach, students are able to design programs that are not only educational but also culturally and socially relevant. For example, education about mental health packaged in the form of interactive discussions, digital campaigns, or community assistance, will be more easily accepted and understood by the community than conventional methods. According to Rahman et al (2025), involving students in PKM-based community service activities can increase public health literacy while honing students' social empathy and communication skills directly in the field.

In addition, the advantage of PKM lies in its flexibility and adaptability to local needs. Students as agents of change not only act as conveyors of information, but also as facilitators who understand the social dynamics of the community where they intervene. In this digital era, PKM can also utilize online platforms to expand the reach of education, such as through informative content on social media, webinars, and podcasts that discuss mental health issues in a light but meaningful way. As explained by Judijanto et al (2023), the integration of technology in community service programs allows for the creation of a sustainable and participatory educational ecosystem. Thus, PKM is not only an academic program, but also acts as a catalyst for real social change in increasing collective awareness of the importance of mental health in the midst of the digitalization current.

In facing the dynamics of the digital era, an adaptive mental health education strategy is very crucial. Society is now more responsive to messages conveyed through visual and interactive media compared to traditional one-way approaches. Therefore, PKM as a means of education must be able to utilize digital media optimally, either through infographics, educational videos, or interactive platforms such as Instagram Live or TikTok which are popular with the younger generation. This is in line with the findings of Ahmad & Nurhidaya (2020), which stated that mental health campaigns that use a digital visual approach are much more effective in shaping understanding and changing public perceptions than conventional methods. With a contextual and technology-based communication strategy, messages about the importance of maintaining mental health can be received more widely and deeply.

However, it is also important to pay attention to the ethics and accuracy of information in delivering mental health education in the digital space. Misinformation or simplification of complex issues can lead to false perceptions and even reinforce existing stigmas. Therefore, in implementing PKM, students need to be equipped with digital literacy skills and a deep understanding of psychological issues so that the information conveyed is not only interesting, but also accurate and responsible. As stated by Arifin et al (2024), good digital literacy is key to utilizing technology as a tool for ethical social transformation. By prioritizing the principles of sustainability, accountability, and inclusivity, PKM has the potential to become a model of mental health education that is not only responsive to developments in the era, but also able to form a new culture that is more open, aware, and concerned about mental health

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method (library research). This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for exploring and analyzing various thoughts, theories, and previous findings that are relevant to mental health issues and the role of the Student Creativity Program (PKM) in increasing public awareness in the digital era.

Literature studies allow researchers to comprehensively understand how various educational approaches, digital communication strategies, and the implementation of student empowerment programs have been applied in the context of mental health.

The data in this study were obtained from various credible secondary sources, such as national and international scientific journals, academic books, research reports, and publications from official organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Indonesian Ministry of Health, and other scientific platforms. The data analysis technique was carried out using a content analysis approach, namely identifying the main themes, patterns, and concepts that emerge from the literature reviewed. This study also uses source triangulation techniques to increase data validity, by comparing various references from different perspectives. With this method, researchers hope to formulate a deep and critical understanding of the strategic role of PKM in shaping public mental health awareness amidst the increasingly massive digital transformation

3. Result and Discussion

Transforming Mental Health Awareness in the Digital Age

1. Ease of Access to Information and the Construction of Pseudo-Consciousness

The development of digital technology, especially social media, has had a significant impact on the way people, especially the younger generation, access information about mental health. Through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, individuals can quickly find a variety of information on mental health topics, from anxiety symptoms to burnout, with just a few taps of their fingers. This phenomenon seems to provide convenience and opportunity to raise awareness about mental health. However, although information is available in large quantities and is easily accessible, the challenge lies in the quality and validity of the information received by users. Much of the content shared on these platforms does not come from credible or scientific sources, and is often presented in an overly simplified or even distorted form. Psychological terms such as anxiety, burnout, depression, or OCD are often used loosely and often do not correspond to a deeper clinical understanding.

Research by Hasibuan et al (2024) shows that although access to mental health information is increasingly easy, people tend to get this information from sources that are not always reliable, such as influencers or other social media users, rather than from valid academic or clinical sources. This risks worsening false awareness, where individuals feel they have sufficient understanding of mental health issues, but are unable to recognize symptoms that actually require proper medical diagnosis and intervention. Self-diagnosis, which is increasingly popular among social media users, often creates a

false perception of their psychological condition, which then leads to incorrect or late treatment. This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the presence of toxic positivity, where much content encourages individuals to ignore or minimize the negative symptoms they experience, thus underestimating the need for professional help.

In psychology literature, self-diagnosis is often considered risky because individuals do not have sufficient training or understanding to diagnose themselves accurately. Research by He et al (2019) states that many individuals are exposed to information about certain psychological symptoms without gaining a proper understanding of the causes and dynamics behind the symptoms. Therefore, although more and more people claim to be 'aware' of mental health, this awareness is often not balanced with in-depth knowledge based on scientific evidence. In fact, this false awareness can actually worsen the stigma of mental health problems, because more and more people feel "infected" with psychological disorders simply because of their personal experiences that have not been medically examined.

In addition, the phenomenon of normalizing mental disorders through social media can blur the lines between mild psychological conditions and mental disorders that require medical treatment.

When mental disorders are considered part of everyday experience or something that is 'normal' in a particular cultural context, people tend to take them less seriously and avoid seeking professional help. This leads to a decline in the overall understanding of mental health and discourages individuals from seeking appropriate help in a timely manner.

The importance of evidence-based mental health literacy is strongly emphasized in an effort to avoid the negative impacts of misinformation. This literacy includes the ability to access, evaluate, and understand information about mental health from credible sources, as well as the ability to distinguish between symptoms that require clinical care and conditions that can be managed with simpler methods. Developing effective mental health literacy requires not only formal education, but also increasing awareness of reliable sources of information, as well as an understanding of the importance of professional help for dealing with more serious conditions. Therefore, although digital technology allows for the widespread dissemination of information, the public must still be trained to sort information and gain an accurate understanding of mental health.

2. Digital Exposure and Psychosocial Challenges of the Modern Generation

Digitalization has had a significant impact on mental health education, providing wider access to information and resources that support understanding of various psychological disorders. Information technology enables more effective dissemination of mental health knowledge through online platforms, health applications, and digital campaigns. These initiatives aim to raise public awareness of the importance of maintaining mental health. However, excessive exposure to social media, with various

content that often shows ideal achievements, beauty standards, and consumer lifestyles, has had negative impacts that are increasingly felt, especially among teenagers and young adults.

One of the main impacts of social media exposure is the emergence of psychosocial stress leading to increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. A study conducted by Prihatiningsih & Wijayanti (2019) showed that there is an increasingly strong correlation between the duration of social media use and increased symptoms of depression, especially in the last decade. This phenomenon includes not only the direct effects of social media use, but also the long-term impact of exposure to content that often does not reflect reality. Social media, especially platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, often present a filtered picture of life, highlighting achievements and seemingly perfect physical appearance, which can create feelings of dissatisfaction or anxiety for those who feel unable to achieve these standards (Atiqah et al., 2025).

In addition, social media exacerbates feelings of isolation and introduces the phenomenon of detrimental social comparison. Wulandari & Budiani (2020) explain that individuals tend to compare themselves to others to evaluate their abilities or self-worth. In the world of social media, this comparison is often unrealistic because individuals tend to only show the best aspects of their lives, while ignoring the reality behind the scenes. This increases social anxiety, where individuals feel left behind or not good enough if their lives do not meet the standards set by others. This phenomenon often leads to decreased self-esteem and feelings of dissatisfaction with oneself, which contribute to mental disorders such as depression and anxiety disorders.

Social anxiety that arises due to social media use is also driven by a phenomenon called Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO describes feelings of isolation or being left behind when someone feels they are not participating in more exciting or better experiences seen on social media. A study conducted by Puspitasari et al (2025) showed that FOMO can affect a person's psychological well-being, increase anxiety levels and reduce life satisfaction. This feeling of isolation is exacerbated by the standards of beauty and life achievements that are often displayed on social media, which makes individuals feel that they are not good enough or unable to achieve existing standards.

While awareness of the importance of mental health is increasing, without a deeper understanding of how to manage the psychological stress caused by digital life, this awareness can be counterproductive. Rather than reducing stress and anxiety, information about mental health that is only theoretical can worsen an individual's condition. For example, although people are increasingly familiar with terms such as depression or anxiety, without the right skills to deal with them, many individuals actually feel more trapped in their problems. This shows that the transformation of mental health awareness does not only include knowledge about mental disorders, but also involves understanding ways to adapt and cope effectively with stress and anxiety caused by digital exposure.

The importance of in-depth and reflective education in managing the negative impacts of social media and digitalization is increasingly evident. According to research by Marlia et al (2023), educational programs that teach coping skills, stress management, and understanding the effects of social media on mental health can help individuals develop healthier attitudes in interacting with technology. Through this approach, mental health education not only introduces terms or definitions of psychological disorders, but also equips individuals with tools and strategies to deal with them. This approach is important for building deeper and more effective awareness, and enabling society to be wiser in dealing with existing digital pressures.

Overall, although digitalization makes it easier to spread knowledge about mental health, it also creates new psychosocial challenges that must be managed carefully. Excessive exposure to social media can increase the risk of psychological disorders, such as depression and anxiety, if not balanced with a good understanding of how to deal with these pressures. Therefore, a comprehensive and reflective educational approach is needed to help people not only recognize mental health problems, but also develop adaptive skills that allow them to survive in this challenging digital life.

The Strategic Role of PKM in Mental Health Education and Advocacy

1. PKM as an Innovative Medium for Community-Based Mental Health Education

The Student Creativity Program (PKM) plays a very important role in developing research and community service-based projects that not only focus on academic achievement, but also have a direct impact on community needs, especially in the field of mental health. In this context, PKM is an effective means to educate the community about the importance of early detection of mental disorders, reducing stigma related to mental health, and promoting psychological well-being. Educational activities designed through PKM tend to use a community-based approach that takes into account local social and cultural characteristics. This provides its own advantages because the material presented becomes more relevant and in accordance with the context of community life, which in turn increases the level of acceptance and success of the program.

This community-based approach reinforces the belief that mental health education programs must be tailored to local realities. As explained by Hamid et al (2024), individuals and communities are influenced by diverse social, cultural, and economic factors. Therefore, a deep understanding of these factors allows mental health programs to be more effective. For example, in some cultures, mental health problems are often considered shameful, so interventions based on local cultural norms will be more acceptable and have a greater impact. PKM programs designed to reduce mental health stigma can also contribute to changing community attitudes towards individuals with mental disorders.

Kusumawati et al (2025) stated that reducing stigma is a crucial step in improving the quality of life of people with mental disorders, because stigma can prevent them from seeking treatment or support.

One of the main focuses of PKM in the field of mental health is early detection of mental disorders. Early detection has the potential to reduce the prevalence of more severe mental disorders. Research by Susiang & Ghofur (2024) shows that earlier intervention in identifying mental health problems can reduce the long-term impact of the disorder. Through educational activities in PKM, the community is given knowledge about the early signs of mental disorders such as anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder, so that they can immediately seek professional help and reduce the risk of escalation of the condition.

In addition, the importance of promoting psychological well-being in the community cannot be ignored. Wijayanti et al (2020) stated that psychological well-being includes not only freedom from mental illness, but also achieving a high quality of life, including in emotional, social, and psychological aspects. PKM programs that teach stress management skills, improve coping skills, and the importance of social support can help people improve their overall psychological well-being. This is especially relevant given the increasing life pressures faced by many individuals in modern society, whether due to economic, social, or work challenges.

The participatory approach applied in PKM ensures that the community does not only receive information as an object, but also becomes the subject of change. Sihalohe et al (2023) in his book explains that participatory education allows individuals to understand their active role in changing their social conditions. In the context of PKM, community involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation not only enriches the program itself, but also increases a sense of ownership and responsibility for the success of the program. Communities involved in mental health programs will be better prepared to implement changes in their lives and support others who experience similar problems.

A study by Pratiwi et al (2024) strengthens this finding by showing that PKM that adopts a participatory approach is able to increase the effectiveness of knowledge transfer. Through this method, the community not only gains theoretical knowledge about mental health, but also gains practical understanding that they can apply in their daily lives. This encourages the internalization of important values about mental health, making the topic part of everyday social conversations. Programs that involve the community at every step have the potential to create sustainable change, because the community feels empowered to deal with their own mental health problems.

Overall, PKM serves as a highly innovative means of mental health education with a community-based approach that actively engages the community. This not only increases public understanding of mental health, but also reduces the stigma that often prevents individuals from seeking help. Through a

participatory and locally tailored approach, PKM acts as a bridge connecting scientific knowledge with everyday practice, and supports the creation of a more aware and caring community for mental health.

2. Digital Literacy Challenges and the Urgency of Cross-Sector Collaboration

The main challenge in implementing the Student Creativity Program (PKM) based on digital media is the low digital literacy among students and target communities. Adequate digital literacy is essential in ensuring that individuals can effectively access, evaluate, and produce quality information in cyberspace. According to Cynthia & Sihotang (2023), digital literacy includes the ability to understand and use various forms of digital media critically and creatively. Unfortunately, many students and communities still do not have these basic skills, making them vulnerable to the spread of inaccurate or even misleading information. This is reflected in the spread of mental health content on social media, which is often simplified or generalized, even though mental health issues are complex topics and require in-depth understanding. This simplification of the issue can obscure public understanding and worsen perceptions of mental disorders, which are often associated with negative stigma.

In addition, the spread of misinformation is an increasingly worrying problem in the digital era. Misinformation can spread quickly through social media, worsening an individual's mental condition and worsening public perception of mental health problems. Research by Syukur et al (2025) shows that misinformation is often more easily spread on social media because it is more interesting and sensational, even though it has no valid basis. This misinformation risks creating unfounded fear or even worsening the psychological condition of individuals who already have mental disorders. Therefore, it is important for students involved in digital media-based PKM to have strong digital literacy skills, so that they can identify and avoid the spread of misinformation.

To overcome this challenge, strengthening students' digital literacy capacity is a primary prerequisite in implementing digital media-based PKM. This effort can be done by organizing training that teaches students how to critically evaluate information, distinguish between valid and invalid sources, and develop the ability to create content that is not only informative but also based on scientific evidence). With these skills, students will be better able to disseminate information that is not only correct but also makes a positive contribution to the public's understanding of mental health.

On the other hand, to ensure that the information conveyed in PKM is truly accurate and not harmful, cross-sector collaboration with professionals such as psychologists, supervising lecturers, and health institutions is very important. Psychologists and mental health experts have in-depth knowledge of mental health issues, as well as the best way to communicate this information to the public in a sensitive and research-based manner. This is important, because inaccurate or insensitive content can

exacerbate the stigma against people with mental disorders. The stigma against mental disorders is closely related to a deep lack of understanding of the issue, and the spread of inaccurate information will only worsen the stigma.

Collaboration with supervisors also plays a vital role, as they can help students design and produce content that meets high academic and ethical standards. Lecturers can provide guidance on the use of psychological theories, scientific approaches, and appropriate methodologies in developing educational materials to be disseminated. In addition, health institutions also have a crucial role in providing access to valid resources, as well as providing training to students on how to disseminate information in a way that is not only educational but also accessible and understandable to the wider community.

Through this cross-sector collaboration, the mental health education ecosystem can be more integrated and sustainable. By involving various parties, such as educational institutions, health institutions, and professionals in the field of psychology, digital media-based PKM programs can create sustainability in the dissemination of correct and effective information. This synergy not only improves the quality of the program but also helps build better awareness and understanding among the community about mental health. Furthermore, with this collaboration, mental health education programs can be continued and developed in a more structured way, so that more people can feel the benefits. As expressed by Durkheim (1951), strong social integration, created through collaboration between various sectors, can strengthen the sustainability of social programs and expand their impact throughout society.

Conclusion

While social media provides easy access to information about mental health, it also poses challenges in the form of false awareness and the spread of invalid information. People often receive simplified or incorrect information, which can exacerbate stigma and delay appropriate treatment. Social media exposure also increases psychosocial distress, anxiety, and social comparison, especially among adolescents. The Student Creativity Program (PKM) can play an important role in community-based mental health education, reducing stigma, and promoting psychological well-being. Collaboration with health professionals and increasing digital literacy among students are essential to ensure that the information disseminated is accurate and effective. Through this approach, PKM can help create a better and more sustainable understanding of mental health in the community.

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