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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIKTOK USE INTENSITY AND SELF-COMPASSION AMONG ADOLESCENTS AT SMK BINTANG NUSANTARA KARANGANYAR

Aliya Nur Mawa Wulandari [1)*], Dyah Vierdiana [2], Nur Rakhmawati [3]

[1,2]Diploma III Program in Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universitas Kusuma Husada Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia
[3]Bachelor of Nursing Program, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universitas Kusuma Husada Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia
Email: aliyanurmawawulandari@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: The development of technology and the internet has increased the variety of media people can use for communication, including social media. Social media applications, particularly TikTok, are most frequently used because they offer features that strongly align with the habits and interests of today's adolescents. Self-compassion also helps adolescents avoid becoming trapped in feelings of low self-worth or negative social comparison; instead, it enables them to view each failure as a learning opportunity to grow into more mature and resilient individuals.
Methods: This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design. The study population comprised 282 female students in grades X and XI at SMK Bintang Nusantara Karanganyar. The sample in this study consisted of 74 students. This study applied Proportional Random Sampling as the sampling method. Data analysis was conducted using the Spearman Rank test.
Results: The Spearman's rank correlation test showed a very weak correlation (rho = 0.020) with no statistically significant relationship (p = 0.865) between TikTok use intensity and self-compassion among adolescents.
Conclusion: The results of the study indicate that most students fall into the moderate category for TikTok usage. This indicates that TikTok is used fairly frequently in students' daily lives, but usage is not yet at either a low or very high level.
Keywords: self-compassion, social media, TikTok

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has significantly influenced various aspects of human life. Technological innovations and the increasing need for internet access have led to the development of various social media platforms that facilitate communication, information sharing, and self-expression. Through social media, users can interact and share various types of content, including information, images, and videos (Khaerunnisa & Syarif, 2024). TikTok is one of the social media platforms widely used by adolescents because its interactive features and diverse content are aligned with their interests and communication habits. On TikTok, adolescents can express themselves, interact with others, and share a variety of content. However, TikTok use may also involve several psychological processes that are potentially related to self-compassion. Addictive users exhibited worse mental health conditions than non-users and moderate users, including higher levels of depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness, social anxiety, attention problems, and lower life satisfaction and sleep quality (Chao, M. et all, 2023). Exposure to idealized content may encourage social comparison, in which adolescents compare their

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appearance, lifestyle, achievements, or experiences with those of others. In addition, self-presentation on TikTok may increase adolescents' attention to how others perceive them and influence their self-evaluation. These processes may influence how adolescents perceive themselves and respond to their perceived shortcomings, which may be related to their level of self-compassion. However, the effects of these processes may vary depending on individual characteristics and how adolescents interpret and respond to social media content.

Advances in technology and the internet have increased the use of various digital platforms, including social media. According to data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), the number of internet users in Indonesia during the 2022–2023 period reached 215,626,156, with a penetration rate of 78.19%. Meanwhile, TikTok is one of the most widely used social media platforms. Data from ByteDance's advertising platform indicated a potential TikTok advertising reach of 126.8 million users aged 18 years and older in Indonesia in early 2024. This figure represents the potential advertising audience rather than the total number of active TikTok users. Therefore, internet users, social media users, TikTok users, and TikTok's advertising audience should be distinguished according to their respective definitions and scopes. In this study, TikTok use is examined specifically in terms of usage intensity among adolescents. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2021 indicated that TikTok users accounted for 14.3% of the 26.5 million internet users in Central Java (Natalia, 2022). Previous research also reported TikTok usage in Karanganyar Regency at 86.8% (Asfuri, 2023). Previous studies have examined various aspects of TikTok and social media use among adolescents, including social comparison, self-esteem, behavior, and psychological well-being. However, research specifically examining the relationship between TikTok use intensity and self-compassion among adolescents, particularly vocational high school students, remains limited. Although social media use may involve psychological processes such as social comparison, self-presentation, exposure to idealized content, and self-evaluation, it remains unclear whether the intensity of TikTok use is significantly associated with adolescents' self-compassion. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the relationship between the intensity of TikTok use and self-compassion among students at SMK Bintang Nusantara Karanganyar.

One psychological characteristic that deserves attention among adolescents is self-compassion. Self-compassion refers to the ability to accept human imperfection and respond to unpleasant experiences with understanding rather than excessive self-judgment. Individuals with self-compassion may be better able to respond to difficulties without excessive self-criticism. In this study, self-compassion was assessed using the Self-Compassion Scale, with low, moderate, and high categories determined by the instrument's established scoring criteria. The moderate category, therefore, represents the corresponding score range and should not be interpreted as indicating a specific psychological condition or level of psychological well-being (Syafitri et al., 2024).

Adolescents with a healthy level of self-compassion are generally able to demonstrate calmness, empathy, sensitivity, warmth, and patience when facing various problems. When faced with failure, these individuals tend to accept the situation more positively and avoid excessive self-blame; instead, they strive to correct their mistakes, thereby becoming more productive and better prepared to face new challenges (Kawitri, 2020). Self-compassion encompasses three main aspects: self-kindness (being kind and gentle toward oneself), common humanity (the awareness that suffering is part of the human experience), and mindfulness (the ability to acknowledge and accept unpleasant experiences in a balanced way without excessive judgment). By cultivating self-compassion, adolescents can enhance psychological well-being, boost self-confidence, and reduce the risk of stress and anxiety.

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One study indicates that self-compassion can act as a protective factor in mitigating the psychological impact of heavy social media use, including body dissatisfaction. The study's findings also revealed that the higher the intensity of TikTok use among adolescents, the greater the likelihood of changes in their behavior, whether in the form of self-expression or adaptation to emerging trends (Apsari, 2024).

The other study findings that self-compassion has a significant effect on perfectionistic self-presentation among late-adolescent TikTok users, with a negative effect size of 55.7%. The study's findings also revealed that the majority of adolescents who use TikTok exhibit low levels of self-compassion, while their levels of perfectionistic self-presentation tend to be high, indicating a tendency among adolescents to present a perfect self-image on social media (Tiara, 2022). Based on the previous studies and the identified research gap, this study aims to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the intensity of TikTok use and self-compassion among adolescents at SMK Bintang Nusantara Karanganyar.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design with a cross-sectional approach. The study aimed to examine the relationship between TikTok use intensity and self-compassion among adolescents at SMK Bintang Nusantara Karanganyar. The study population consisted of 282 students in Grades X and XI at SMK Bintang Nusantara Karanganyar. A sample is a subset of a population that possesses characteristics relevant to the population under study (Roflin, 2021). A total of 74 students from Grades X and XI were included as the study sample. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error. Subsequently, proportional random sampling was used to allocate and select respondents proportionally from each class (Mardhiyah Mardhiyah, Nur Afni Dinilhaq, Yona Amelia, Adelia Arini, Rully Hidayatullah, 2025). The number of respondents allocated to each class was calculated using the formula $nh = \left(\frac{Nh}{N}\right) x\, n1$ where nh represents the sample size for each class, Nh represents the number of students in each class, N represents the total population, and n represents the total sample size of 74 respondents. After determining the sample allocation for each class, the eligible students in each class were listed and assigned numbers. Respondents were then selected randomly from each class according to the predetermined sample allocation, ensuring that every eligible student had an equal opportunity to be selected. This procedure ensured that each class was proportionally represented in the sample. The final sample consisted of 67 female students (90.5%) and 7 male students (9.5%). The inclusion criteria were established before the sampling process to ensure that the selected respondents met the characteristics required for the study (Roflin, 2021).

The sample selection criteria in this study consist of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria are requirements that research subjects must meet in order to be considered respondents in accordance with the characteristics of the target population. The inclusion criteria for this study are students willing to participate as respondents; 10th- and 11th-grade students at SMK Bintang Nusantara Karanganyar; and students with a TikTok account. Exclusion criteria are conditions used to determine which members of the population are not included or selected as study participants. Students who were absent during the data collection process and students who filled out the questionnaire but did not complete it were excluded. This study was conducted at SMK Bintang Nusantara Karanganyar due to its strategic location and suitability for conducting the research. Additionally, SMK Bintang Nusantara Karanganyar met the sample criteria determined by the researcher. In conducting this study, two measurement instruments were used: one to assess TikTok social media usage intensity, covering aspects of attention, comprehension,

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duration, and frequency; and a questionnaire adapted by Moh. Ikbalur Ruli Narullah, consisting of 15 statements.

Self-Compassion Scale (SCS). Self-compassion was measured using the Indonesian version of the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), which was adapted and validated by Sugianto, Suwartono, and Sutanto (2020). The instrument consists of 26 items covering six dimensions: self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, isolation, mindfulness, and over-identification. Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = almost never to 5 = almost always. The total score ranges from 26 to 130. Negatively worded items are reverse-scored before calculating the total score. Based on the established scoring criteria, self-compassion is categorized as low (26–60), moderate (61–95), and high (96–130). The Indonesian SCS demonstrated adequate validity based on confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.872 (Sugianto et al., 2020). The instrument was therefore considered appropriate for assessing self-compassion in the present study. The researcher submitted a research proposal to obtain ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee at Kusuma Husada University of Surakarta, with Ethical Approval Number: 3086/UKH.L.02/EC/XII/2025.

RESULTS

To establish the demographic profile of the adolescents included in the study, the respondents' characteristics were first examined based on age. Age is an important demographic characteristic to describe because the participants were adolescents at different stages of development within the study population. The distribution of the 74 respondents according to age is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents by Age

Age (years)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
15	22	29,7%
16	35	47,3%
17	17	23,0%
Total	74	100%

Table 1. states that the results of the analysis of respondent characteristics based on age demographics show that the 16-year-old age group was the largest, with 35 respondents (47,3%), while the 15-year-old age group had 22 respondents (29,7%). The 17-year-old age group ranked last, with 17 respondents, representing 23,0%.

In addition to age, gender was described to provide a more comprehensive profile of the respondents included in the study. This demographic information provides further context for interpreting the subsequent findings regarding TikTok use intensity and self-compassion among the participants. The distribution of respondents according to gender is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Female	67	90,5%
Male	7	9,5%
Total	74	100%

Table 2. presents the results of the demographic analysis. By gender, the majority of respondents in this study were women, totaling 67 individuals (90,5%), while men numbered 7 (9,5%).

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Following the description of the respondents' demographic characteristics, the analysis focused on the first main study variable, namely the intensity of TikTok use. Describing the distribution of TikTok use intensity provides an overview of how frequently and intensively the adolescents engage with TikTok before examining its potential relationship with self-compassion. The distribution of respondents by level of TikTok social media use intensity is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Characteristics of the TikTok Social Media Usage Questionnaire

TikTok Social Media Usage Questionnaire	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	1	1,4%
Moderate	49	66,2%
High	24	32,4%
Total	74	100%

Based on the results of the questionnaire assessing TikTok use intensity, the moderate category was the most prevalent, comprising 49 respondents (66.2%), followed by the high category with 24 respondents (32.4%), while only 1 respondent (1.4%) was classified in the low category. Based on the predetermined scoring criteria, total scores ranging from 15–30 were categorized as low, 31–45 as moderate, and 46–60 as high.

After describing the intensity of TikTok use, the analysis proceeded to the second main study variable: self-compassion. Assessing the level of self-compassion is important for providing a baseline description of respondents' psychological characteristics before examining whether variations in TikTok use intensity are associated with differences in self-compassion. The distribution of respondents by level of self-compassion is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Characteristics of the Self-Compassion Questionnaire

Self-Compassion Questionnaire	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	1	1,4%
Moderate	55	74,3%
High	18	24,3%
Total	74	100%

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire data on self-compassion, the majority of participants (55, 74.3%) fell into the moderate self-compassion category. In second place were 18 people (24.3%) in the high self-compassion category. Finally, there was one person (1.4%) in the low self-compassion category.

The descriptive findings presented in Tables 3 and 4 provide an overview of the distribution of TikTok use intensity and self-compassion among the respondents. To address the study's main objective, the analysis was subsequently extended to examine whether the intensity of TikTok use was statistically associated with self-compassion. The relationship between the two variables was assessed using Spearman's rank correlation test, and the results are presented in Table 5.

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Table 5: Results of the Analysis of the Relationship Between TikTok Social Media Use and Self-Compassion

Spearman's rho	Intensity of TikTok Social Media Use	Correlation Coeficient	1.000	0.20
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.	.865
		N	74	74
	Self Compasiion	Correlation Coeficient	.020	1.000
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.865	.
		N	74	74

The results of the bivariate analysis to test the correlation between TikTok social media use and self-compassion showed a significance value of 0.865, which is >0.005. This indicates that no relationship was found between TikTok use and self-compassion among students at SMK Bintang Nusantara Karanganyar. The strength of the relationship between the two variables, the intensity of TikTok use and self-compassion, can be seen from the correlation coefficient of 0.020, which is very low since it falls within the range of 0.00–0.25.

Based on the bivariate analysis using Spearman's rank correlation test, the correlation coefficient was 0.020 with a significance value of $p = 0.865$ ($p > 0.05$). The correlation coefficient of 0.020 indicates an extremely weak or near-zero positive correlation. Since $p = 0.865 > 0.05$, the correlation was not statistically significant, indicating that there was no statistically significant relationship between the intensity of TikTok social media use and self-compassion among students at SMK Bintang Nusantara Karanganyar.

DISCUSSION

The fact that 16-year-olds dominated the sample in this study indicates that the respondents were in a critical stage of adolescent development. This aligns with the view that adolescents undergo rapid biological, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. At this age, there is accelerated physical growth, reproductive hormonal maturation, and the development of abstract thinking skills (Amelia Lova, 2025). In addition, adolescents begin to form their self-identity and have a greater need for social recognition from their peers.

These findings are consistent with another study that found social media use may encourage social comparison, particularly when individuals are strongly influenced by others' judgments and acceptance. However, the influence of social media may vary depending on individual psychological characteristics and how users interpret the content they encounter. Therefore, the intensity of social media use alone may not be sufficient to explain differences in self-compassion. This may help explain the present study's finding that there was no statistically significant relationship between TikTok use intensity and self-compassion ($\rho = 0.020$; $p = 0.865 > 0.05$) (Nadhifa, 2022).

The respondents in this study were predominantly female, with 67 (90.5%) female and 7 (9.5%) male. However, this distribution should not be interpreted as evidence that female students are more engaged in social media use. The predominance of female respondents may reflect the composition of the study population and sampling frame rather than a true gender difference in TikTok or social media engagement. (Triyana, 2026), discussed behavioral changes among adolescent girls associated with exposure to digital media, including changes in self-expression, communication patterns, and lifestyle. However, these findings cannot be used to establish that female students in the present study have higher levels of TikTok engagement solely on the basis of the sample's gender distribution.

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This is supported by a previous study, which reports that the percentage of teenage girls who use social media exceeds 90%, higher than that of teenage boys. Adolescent girls tend to use social media more frequently than adolescent boys. This is related to the tendency for girls to use social media to maintain and build social relationships, while boys use it more for group-based activities and entertainment (Kosen, 2026).

Thus, high intensity of TikTok use does not necessarily directly influence adolescents' levels of self-compassion. This aligns with the view expressed by (Salsabila, 2024), who states that research on self-image on social media is not limited to a single platform, as other social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, also feature photos and videos related to body image. Consequently, the impact of social media on adolescents' psychological well-being does not stem solely from TikTok; thus, the relationship between TikTok use intensity and self-compassion is not always statistically significant.

The research findings align with Del Barrio's theory of social media use intensity, which holds that intensity is measured not only by access frequency but also by the level of understanding, engagement, and involvement individuals have with the content they consume. This means that even if TikTok usage intensity is high, if adolescents do not deeply internalize or interpret the content, its impact on psychological conditions such as self-compassion becomes insignificant (Amelia, 2024).

The respondents' self-compassion was predominantly categorized as moderate based on the established scoring criteria. This finding indicates that the respondents demonstrated a moderate level of self-compassion in addressing personal difficulties and negative experiences through self-kindness and self-acceptance. This finding is consistent with the other study who stated that self-compassion involves accepting personal imperfections as part of the human experience and responding to difficult experiences with greater self-acceptance (Tazkya, 2022).

The presence of adolescents with high self-compassion indicates that some individuals are kinder to themselves when facing failure and understand that negative emotional experiences are a natural part of everyone's life. A study finds that self-compassion is a key factor in emotion regulation because individuals learn to accept negative feelings by treating themselves with kindness. These findings align with the results of a study, which explains that self-compassion plays a vital role in emotional regulation and mental health by helping individuals accept their own weaknesses, manage negative emotions, and improve their psychological well-being (Permatasari, 2024).

Self-compassion is a skill that can be developed to support adolescents' psychological well-being (Hasanah, N., -, M., Ardianti, W. ., & Sitepu, 2024). The development of self-compassion may also be influenced by parenting styles, as inappropriate parenting practices may hinder adolescents' ability to regulate emotions and cope with psychological stress (Kholifah, 2021; Maula, Yusrina Ni'mal; Lina, Nur; Neni, 2023). In the context of social media use, adolescents may engage in psychological processes relevant to self-compassion. Exposure to idealized content on TikTok may encourage social comparison, in which adolescents evaluate themselves by comparing their appearance, achievements, lifestyle, or experiences with those of others. In addition, self-presentation on TikTok may increase adolescents' concern about how others perceive them and influence their self-evaluation. These processes may affect how adolescents perceive their strengths and shortcomings and how they respond to personal difficulties, which may be related to their level of self-compassion. However, this relationship may vary depending on individual characteristics and how adolescents interpret and respond to social media content. Therefore, these psychological processes provide a theoretical basis for examining the potential relationship between the intensity of TikTok use and self-compassion among adolescents. Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to determine

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causal relationships between TikTok use intensity and self-compassion. In addition, the study was conducted at a single vocational high school with a relatively small sample of 74 respondents, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to adolescents in other schools or regions. The use of self-report questionnaires may also introduce response bias because the data depend on participants' perceptions and willingness to provide accurate responses. Furthermore, this study focused on TikTok use intensity and self-compassion without examining other factors that may influence self-compassion, such as parenting styles, family environment, peer relationships, and individual psychological characteristics.

CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that TikTok use intensity should not be viewed as an isolated factor in understanding adolescents' self-compassion. Self-compassion appears to be a multidimensional psychological characteristic that may be shaped by various personal, interpersonal, and environmental factors, including emotional regulation, family relationships, social support, and individual psychological characteristics. Therefore, efforts to promote healthy psychological development among adolescents should focus not only on regulating social media use but also on strengthening adolescents' capacity for self-acceptance, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping in their everyday lives. Further research involving broader populations and additional psychosocial factors is needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors associated with self-compassion among adolescents.

RECOMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, adolescents are encouraged to use TikTok wisely and maintain a balanced pattern of social media use. Parents are encouraged to provide guidance and support for adolescents in developing healthy social media use habits while promoting positive self-acceptance and self-compassion. Nurses and other health professionals may provide education on healthy social media use and on developing self-compassion among adolescents. For SMK Bintang Nusantara Karanganyar, the findings may serve as additional information to inform the development of educational activities related to healthy social media use and self-compassion among students. Future researchers are encouraged to investigate other factors associated with self-compassion, such as social support, emotion regulation, family relationships, and individual psychological characteristics. Future studies may also involve larger, more diverse samples to provide broader evidence on TikTok use intensity and self-compassion among adolescents.

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