Digital Media Use and Students' Political Information Consumption Patterns: Evidence from Religious Higher Education in Indonesia

Yudi Dharma[1]* https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3236-4877
Laurel Dwi Susanto[2] https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4535-6705
Rina Manggalani[3] https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0934-5385
Andy Corry Wardhani[4] https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5854-257X
Ni Ketut Riska Dewi Prawita[5] https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8295-3297

[1,2,3] Buddhist Communication Science Department, Jinarakkhita Buddhist College of Lampung, Indonesia
[4]Master of Communication Science, University of Lampung, Lampung, Indonesia
[5]English Language Education Program, I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa State Hindu University, Denpasar, Indonesia
Corresponding author: yudidharma@sekha.kemenag.go.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effect of digital media usage on political information consumption patterns among students in the odd semester at STIAB Jinarakkhita Lampung. In the digital age, internet-based media has become the main source of political information for students due to its fast, interactive, and user-friendly nature. This study uses a quantitative approach through a survey of students selected based on specific characteristics. The research instrument, in the form of a questionnaire, was tested for validity and reliability and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The results show that the use of digital media has a strong and significant influence on political information consumption patterns. These findings indicate that the use of digital media plays an important role in shaping students' preferences, habits, and ways of accessing and understanding political issues. However, there are various other factors beyond digital media that also influence students' political information consumption patterns, such as social environment, direct interaction, organizational experience, and political education on campus. Overall, digital media has proven to be an important component in the process of shaping political literacy and awareness among students, although it is not the only determining factor.

Introduction

In the digital age, the flow of political information is no longer exclusively controlled by mainstream media such as television, radio, and newspapers. Digital media has become a disruptive force that has changed not only how political information is produced, but also how it is consumed and understood by the public (Kalpokas, 2017). In the context of today's students, this shift is particularly striking. Access to digital technology, particularly mobile devices and the internet, has triggered a profound transformation in the patterns of

political information consumption (Zúñiga & Chen, 2019).

Digital media is any form of communication that uses digital technology to help disseminate information across various platforms such as social media, podcasts, video streaming, and other digital applications. Of course, digital media is different from traditional media such as television or print media. Digital media facilitates dynamic interaction between users as well as fast and comprehensive access to information (Amnah et al., 2025). The digital media used has a global influence because it can reach a wide and diverse audience geographically, culturally, socially, or demographically. Therefore, this is related to digital communication, which also utilizes a global network connected via the internet to disseminate information quickly and cheaply. Currently, digital media plays a dominant role as a two-way, instant, and highly personal channel of political communication. Students are no longer passive recipients of information, but also producers and disseminators of political content. Through social media such as Twitter (X), Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, students can express their opinions, shape discussions, and even influence the direction of public opinion at large. This dynamic has created a new landscape where the boundaries between professional journalism and citizen participation are becoming increasingly blurred. Political events that were previously strictly mediated can now be freely commented on, interpreted, and even twisted by anyone.

Digital media offers various conveniences, such as real-time access to information, the ability to customize news preferences, and direct interaction with content through comments and sharing on social media. This makes digital media increasingly dominant in the lives of millennials. However, these changes also bring new challenges, such as increased exposure to unverified information, fake news (hoaxes), and information polarization due to social media algorithms that tend to reinforce users' confirmation bias (Rianti et al., 2025).

Media consumption patterns refer to the ways in which individuals or groups use various types of media, such as television, radio, the internet, or social media, to obtain information, entertainment, or communication. Understanding media consumption patterns is very important in media and communication studies, especially for analyzing their impact on the behavior, thinking, and social life of society. The measurement of media consumption patterns, frequency, and duration are two dimensions that are often used. News consumption patterns refer to the habits and preferences of audiences in selecting, accessing, and responding to various types of media and news content. These factors are not only determined by the type of media used but also by the intensity of use, the type of news that is in demand, and the individual's motives for consuming information (Nugraha et al., 2025).

In this context, speed, quantity, and interactivity are the main characteristics of digital political information. Digital media gives users the freedom to follow current issues in *real-time* without having to rely on conventional media broadcast schedules. However, this ease and speed are not always proportional to the depth or accuracy of the information consumed. The proliferation of disinformation, hoaxes, and opinion manipulation is a logical consequence of an information system that is too open but lacks quality control.

This phenomenon is particularly noticeable among students. They are future intellectuals or young scholars in a segment of society that is often characterized by various labels such as (Sihombing, 2020, p. 106). Students are considered to have a high level of intellectuality, intelligence in thinking, and planning in action. Critical thinking and acting quickly and

appropriately are traits that tend to be inherent in every student, which are complementary principles. Furthermore, thinking about positive things can also increase students' motivation in responding to various issues that arise before them. The situation that arises causes the learning process to be carried out in a non-contextual manner but follows the established rules (Kasrah et al., 2023).

These characteristics make students more susceptible to political information that is fast-paced, superficial, and emotional. Moreover, social media algorithms tend to present content that matches user preferences, creating a *filter bubble* and *echo chamber* effect that reinforces political polarization. As a result, even though political information is easily accessible, the quality of political understanding can become increasingly fragmented and biased. This can also provide insight into individual values and beliefs. The way a person views human relationships determines how they treat the world. Negative performance results in harmful treatment, while positive knowledge leads to treating the world positively (Kusuma et al., 2023).

On the other hand, students' patterns of political information consumption also show a shift in values: from formal political engagement (such as electoral participation) to more spontaneous and symbolic digital political engagement. For example, liking, sharing, or commenting on political content is considered a form of political expression, even if it is not always accompanied by critical reflection. This shows how digital spaces not only change the way people obtain political information, but also the way they understand and interpret political engagement itself.

This transformation needs to be taken seriously because it concerns the quality of democracy in the digital age. If the public is only exposed to information that reinforces their own views, without exposure to objective and argumentative alternative discourses, then the digital public sphere will become an arena for unhealthy narrative conflicts. In addition, the public's ability to sort and verify political information is crucial in determining the direction of policy and social stability in general.

Based on this background, an in-depth exploration of how digital media influences patterns of political information consumption among students is necessary. This study focuses on three main aspects, namely, preferences for channels and forms of political information consumed, motivations and habits in accessing information, and the impact of such consumption on political understanding and participation.

Although previous studies have examined digital media use and political information consumption, most focus on Western contexts or large public universities. Limited empirical research explores how digital media shapes political information consumption among students in religious-based higher education institutions in Indonesia. This study addresses this gap by providing quantitative evidence from Indonesian higher education, offering insights into how digital media use influences students' political information consumption patterns.

Method

The research method used in this study is quantitative with a survey method because it aims to obtain representative and valid data. Information is collected from respondents using a questionnaire. Generally, it is limited to a sample where information is collected from a portion of the population (sample) to represent the entire population.

The sample selection was conducted using *purposive sampling*, taking into account the characteristics of age, education level, and level of digital media usage so that the data collected was relevant and could accurately describe the phenomenon. The sample in this study consisted of 62 odd-semester students at STIAB Jinarakkhita. The data collection instrument in this study used a questionnaire that had undergone validity and reliability testing before being used extensively. Validity testing was carried out using content and construct validity methods, while reliability was tested using *Cronbach's Alpha* coefficient with results showing a score above 0.7, indicating that the instrument was reliable enough to be used.

Data collection was conducted online. In addition, the researcher also conducted limited in-depth interviews with several selected respondents to obtain a more in-depth picture of their experiences and views on the influence of digital media use on political information consumption patterns. The collected data was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, primarily with the assistance of SPSS version 26 software, to determine the relationship and influence of digital media usage on political information consumption patterns that are significant. To ensure data validity, this study also established ethical standards by obtaining permission from the ethics committee and informing all respondents about the objectives, benefits, and their rights during the study. Respondent participation was voluntary and anonymous, and the data obtained will be kept confidential in accordance with research ethics principles. With this approach, it is hoped that the research results will not only be valid and reliable, but also able to provide useful scientific contributions.

Findings

This study aims to determine the effect of digital media usage on political information consumption patterns among students in the odd semester at STIAB Jinarakkhita Lampung. The results of the study were obtained through quantitative data analysis using SPSS software version 26. The following presents the main findings of the study and the results of statistical analysis that describe the relationship between the research variables.

This study involved 62 respondents who were odd semester students from three study programs at STIAB Jinarakkhita Lampung.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Use of Digital Media (X)	62	73	100	80.66	6,569
Political Information Consumption Patterns (Y)	62	68	100	79.48	7,788

source: results of data analysis with SPSS 27

The average value for the Digital Media Utilization variable of 80.66 indicates a high level of exposure to digital media, while the average value for Political Information Consumption Patterns of 79.48 indicates that the respondents' Political Information Consumption Patterns have begun to take shape.

Table 2. ANOVA Analysis Output

ANOVAᵇ					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	14.601	1	14.601	53.50	0.000
Residual	16.399	60	0.273		
Total	31.000	61			

source: results of data analysis with SPSS 27

Based on the regression analysis results presented in Table 2, the calculated F value is 53.50 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$. This significance value is substantially lower than the commonly accepted threshold of 0.05, indicating that the regression model used in this study is statistically significant. Accordingly, the results confirm that digital media use has a significant effect on students' political information consumption patterns at STIAB Jinarakkhita Lampung.

Furthermore, the Mean Square Regression value (14.601) is considerably higher than the Mean Square Residual value (0.273), demonstrating that the model has strong explanatory power in accounting for variations in political information consumption patterns. This indicates that the regression model is capable of effectively explaining the relationship between digital media use and political information consumption. Overall, the ANOVA results provide robust statistical evidence that digital media use significantly contributes to shaping students' political information consumption behavior in the higher education context.

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	0.686	0.471	0.462	5.712

source: results of data analysis with SPSS 27

The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.471 indicates that 47.1% of the variance in students' political information consumption patterns is explained by digital media use. This finding demonstrates that digital media use constitutes a strong explanatory factor in shaping how students access, select, and engage with political information in the higher education context. The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.462 further strengthens this conclusion by accounting for sample size and model complexity, suggesting that the regression model exhibits a good level of stability and explanatory power. The relatively small difference between R^2 and Adjusted R^2 indicates that the model is not overfitted and that digital media use consistently contributes to explaining variations in political information consumption patterns.

Furthermore, the standard error of the estimate (5.712) indicates an acceptable level of predictive accuracy, suggesting that the model can reasonably estimate students' political information consumption patterns based on their digital media use. However, the results also imply that 52.9% of the variance remains unexplained, pointing to the influence of other important factors beyond digital media. These may include interpersonal discussions, family and peer environments, participation in student organizations, and formal political education within higher education institutions. This finding underscores the multifaceted nature of political information consumption and highlights the need for

future studies to adopt more comprehensive models that integrate social, institutional, and cognitive variables to better capture the complexity of students' political information behavior.

Table 4. Regression Equation

Coefficients[a]					
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	13.862	9.010	-	1.539	0
Use of Digital Media (X)	0.814	0.111	0.686	7.307	0.000

source: results of data analysis with SPSS 27

The constant value (intercept) of 13.862 indicates that when digital media use is held at its minimum level, then the dependent variable (Y) is predicted to be 13.862. The regression coefficient for the Digital Media Utilization variable is 0.814, which means that every one-unit increase in Digital Media Utilization will increase the value of Y by 0.814, assuming other variables remain constant.

The t-value of 7.307 is much greater than the t-table value, and the significance value (Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05) indicates that Digital Media Utilization (X) has a significant effect on the dependent variable (Y). Therefore, it can be concluded that the higher the Digital Media Utilization, the greater the increase in the dependent variable studied. The Beta value of 0.686 also reinforces that the effect is strong and positive.

Discussion

The research results shown in Table 4 indicate that the Digital Media Utilization variable (X) has a significant effect on the Political Information Consumption Pattern ( ) variable (Y). The constant value of 13.862 indicates that when Digital Media Utilization is zero, Political Information Consumption Patterns still have a base value of 13.862. This means that even though digital media is not utilized properly by students, such as for searching, receiving, and processing political information, it can still significantly influence their information consumption patterns.

The regression coefficient of 0.814 shows that every one-unit increase in Digital Media Utilization will increase Political Information Consumption Patterns by 0.814 units. This value confirms that speed, fragmentation of information sources, and uncertainty about the truth of information are key values in modern information consumption. For students living in the midst of a fast-paced lifestyle, social media such as X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok offer an experience that cannot be matched by conventional media. Instant notifications, *live reports* from the scene, and short video clips that can be shared immediately make political information not only quickly accessible but also immediately commented on and reproduced by other users. This phenomenon demonstrates that speed is not merely a technical issue but has become a social necessity in shaping collective political perceptions and attitudes. In addition, good communication and speaking skills are also required in order to convey messages to others directly or verbally regarding the information obtained (Avitasari et al., 2023).

The t-value calculated at 7.307 with a significance level of 0.000 indicates a very strong and significant effect. Since the significance value is well below 0.05, the research

hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is a positive and significant relationship between Digital Media Utilization and Political Information Consumption Patterns. These results show that digital media has revolutionized students' political information consumption patterns. Although it offers greater accessibility and participation, it also poses serious challenges in terms of information validity and depth of political understanding. The Beta value of 0.686 indicates that the strength of the influence of Digital Media Utilization on Political Information Consumption Patterns is in the strong category, and the direction of the influence is positive. In other words, the higher the Digital Media Utilization, the more likely students are to obtain political information.

The use of digital media has been proven to have a significant influence on students' political information consumption patterns. In line with *the Uses and Gratifications Theory*, students actively choose digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, or online news portals to meet their need for political information that is fast, easily accessible, and presented in an interesting way. This theory emphasizes that audiences have desires (based on psychological and social factors) to choose what they want from the media exposure (Karunia & Ashri, 2021).

Digital media also plays an important role in shaping the political agenda of students. Based on *Agenda Setting Theory,* the media not only reflects reality but also actively shapes public perception of reality (Priscilla et al., 2025) . This can be seen when students discuss issues that are trending on digital platforms, whether it be elections, government policies, or other socio-political issues. Thus, digital media not only provides information but also influences students' focus on certain political issues.

In relation to the use of digital media, there is a dimension of speed that is a key value in modern information consumption. Students who now live in the midst of a fast-paced life, social media such as X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok offer an experience that cannot be matched by conventional media. Instant notifications, *live reports* from the scene, and short video clips that can be shared immediately make political information not only quickly accessible but also immediately commented on and reproduced by other users. This phenomenon shows that speed is not just a technical issue but has become a social necessity in shaping collective political perceptions and attitudes.

Furthermore, the preference for social media is also reinforced by adaptive algorithm structures, where digital platforms present information according to users' click patterns, searches, and interests. This means that users do not have to go to great lengths to find political information; the system will deliver the information directly to their home pages. This efficiency has led to an increasing dependence on digital media for daily information needs, including complex political issues (Habermas, 2006). Students use digital media not only as a means of entertainment but also as a primary source for obtaining political information. This is influenced by the characteristics of digital media, which offer fast, practical, and diverse access to information. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and online news portals are the main choices because they provide political content in a more concise, visual, and easy-to-understand form. In addition, social media can also support various activities, especially for students, including education, learning, social interaction, and the development of marketing communication strategies to support personal competence (Widiyanto et al., 2024).

On the other hand, the need for fast information among students is a complex phenomenon. On the one hand, it reflects adaptation to the demands of the times and

opens up opportunities for broader political participation. However, on the other hand, speed that is not accompanied by accuracy has the potential to create information noise and reduce the quality of political deliberation. For this reason, there needs to be a systematic effort in to increase the capacity of the public to manage the speed of information wisely, through digital literacy education, strengthening online communication ethics, and more accountable digital platform policies. In this case, management skills are also necessary for students, not only limited to improving communication skills, but also including the development of essential management skills (Seneru et al., 2024).

Media literacy refers to an individual's ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in various forms. Media literacy is very important in the digital context, where information is available in large quantities and varies in quality. Millennials, despite their proficiency in using technology, often face challenges in assessing the credibility of news sources and distinguishing between valid information and fake news (hoaxes) (Anugrafianto, 2023). Additionally, utilizing digital media also requires skills that can help students achieve academic success and build a more balanced personal and professional life (Kasrah, 2024). Digital literacy can also be developed for individuals' ability to understand, use, and participate effectively in the ever-evolving digital world. This includes understanding information technology, operational skills with hardware and software, and the ability to critically evaluate and use digital information (Saputri & Manggalani, 2023).

Therefore, based on the above description, these findings indicate that almost half of the variation in changes in political information consumption patterns can be explained by how students use digital media in their daily lives. Thus, the use of digital media can be categorized as a factor that has a strong and significant influence in shaping political information consumption behavior among students. The 47% influence confirms that individuals actively choose media to meet their information needs, particularly cognitive needs related to political issues. Students utilize digital media because of its characteristics, which provide quick access, comprehensive information, and a variety of formats that are easier to understand, such as short videos, infographics, and brief news. It is this need for practicality and speed that drives students to form new habits in political information consumption. In addition, a person's view of themselves is also necessary in determining their actions and behavior. This means that a person's self-concept can influence their actions and behavior, including their communication (Avitasari, 2023), especially in receiving the information obtained.

Although the influence of digital media reaches 47%, there are 53% other factors outside the research variables, such as family environment, face-to-face discussions, student organization experiences, political education on campus, and peer influence. This shows that even though digital media has a significant role, students' consumption of political information is still influenced by a wider social context.

Overall, the influence value of 47% shows that digital media is an important component in shaping students' political information consumption patterns, although it is not the only determinant. Digital media remains a dominant and relevant channel of information, especially in a modern political communication ecosystem based on speed, interactivity, and personalization of information.

Conclusion

Digital media plays a significant role in shaping students' behavior and habits in accessing and understanding political information. Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that digital media has become the main source of information that students rely on because of its ability to provide information quickly, in real-time, and easily accessible anytime and anywhere. The magnitude of the influence of digital media, at 47%, shows that almost half of the variation in students' political information consumption patterns is influenced by how intensely and effectively they utilize digital media. This significant influence indicates that digital media not only functions as a means of disseminating information but also influences how students form perceptions, select issues they consider important, and determine the extent to which they engage in political discourse.

However, the 47% influence of digital media also shows that there are 53% other external factors that play a role in shaping students' political information consumption patterns. These factors can include the social environment, direct discussions with peers or family, student organization activities, personal experiences, and political education received on campus. This confirms that digital media is not the only determining factor, but rather one of many elements that contribute to the process of shaping students' political literacy and awareness.

Overall, this study confirms that digital media has a strong influence, although not entirely dominant, in influencing students' political information consumption patterns. Digital media plays an important role in expanding the accessibility of political information, increasing students' knowledge of current issues, and encouraging their involvement in political discussions and conversations that develop in the digital space. Thus, digital media is an integral part of the modern political communication ecosystem that provides great opportunities for students to develop a better understanding, a more critical attitude, and more active participation in political life.

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