



STUDENT LEARNING STYLE PATTERNS TRENDS

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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This study aims to analyze trends in adolescent learning styles at MAN 1 Medan, specifically the phenomenon of cramming (SKS), and its impact on learning outcomes. Unlike previous studies that focused solely on pre-exam behavior, this study positions the SKS as a reflection of changes in adolescent learning culture in the digital era. Using a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis methods, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, involving the vice principal, teachers, students, and parents as informants. The results indicate that the SKS learning style emerges as a result of the dominance of extrinsic motivation, academic pressure, the influence of digital technology, and poor student time management. This learning style is instantaneous, situational, and short-term oriented, with a tendency toward quick memorization rather than a deep understanding of concepts. The impact not only reduces the stability of academic achievement but also causes physical fatigue, psychological stress, and low long-term learning motivation. These findings highlight the urgent role of teachers and parents in fostering intrinsic motivation and more disciplined and sustainable reflective learning habits. This study provides a theoretical contribution to enriching the study of learning styles in the digital era, while also offering practical recommendations for more adaptive and preventative learning strategies against the culture of instant learning.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a strategic process in shaping students' character, critical thinking skills, and adaptability to changing times (Creswell, 2020). However, in practice, the Indonesian education system remains heavily oriented toward achieving short-term academic grades rather than fostering a reflective and sustainable learning process (Antara et al., 2019). This situation has given rise to a culture of instant learning, one example of which is the habit of cramming (SKS), a pattern of sudden study before exams, primarily focused on achieving immediate grades rather than in-depth conceptual understanding (Vera & Amalia, 2023).

The SKS phenomenon has become increasingly prevalent in the digital era. Easy access to information via the internet, YouTube, or quick summaries like AI chatbots encourages students to develop the perception that learning doesn't need to be gradual, but rather instantaneous and situational (Supriyanto, 2021). While technology facilitates the learning process, it also reinforces a culture of shortcut thinking that weakens academic discipline and time management skills (Suharningsih, 2019). Previous research also

shows that the habit of sudden study is correlated with increased academic stress and low long-term knowledge retention (Dida Firmansyah et al., 2018).

Several previous studies have indeed discussed the behavior of SKS (Study Groups) as a learning strategy for exams. However, these studies tend to be partial and fail to view SKS as part of the changing learning culture of adolescents in the modern digital ecosystem, particularly in the context of religious-based educational institutions such as MAN (Maarif, 2020). This is the main research gap that underscores the urgency of this research: the SKS phenomenon is not merely a pre-exam habit, but a reflection of the crisis in intrinsic motivation and the transformation of learning patterns of the increasingly pragmatic and instantaneous digital generation.

Based on this background, this study aims to (1) identify trends in adolescent learning styles at MAN 1 Medan, specifically the SKS phenomenon, and (2) analyze its impact on student learning outcomes academically, physically, and psychologically. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the study of contemporary learning styles based on digital culture, and practically provide strategic recommendations for teachers and parents in fostering more reflective, disciplined, and sustainable learning habits.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at understanding the phenomenon of cramming (SKS) in depth through the perspective of subjects who experience it directly. This approach was chosen because it is relevant for exploring students' subjective meanings, motivations, and experiences within their natural life contexts, rather than for statistically testing hypotheses (Creswell, 2020). Therefore, the focus of the research is not solely on learning outcomes, but also on the psychological, social, and cultural processes that shape instant learning habits in the digital age.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, which involves deliberately selecting research subjects based on their level of relevance and involvement with the phenomenon under study (Moleong, 2000). The informants included the Vice Principal for Curriculum as the primary source of information on policies and macro observations of student learning patterns; two core subject teachers who understand students' academic behavior in daily classroom settings; ten students with a tendency toward cramming habits as key informants; and one parent as a triangulation informant to examine how these learning habits are shaped by family supervision. This selection of informants was designed to ensure the research perspective encompasses structural, pedagogical, personal, and domestic dimensions simultaneously.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: non-participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to identify students' learning rhythms in the school environment, including their psychological expressions, physical gestures, and academic readiness for exams. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow informants to openly describe their experiences while remaining focused on the research focus (Tabrani, 2015). Meanwhile, documentation techniques were used to review students' academic records, exam minutes, and visual documentation to support the interpretation of field data.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles & Huberman interactive model (in Sugiyono, 2022), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected information relevant to the research focus, particularly that reflecting students' motivational patterns, time management, and learning styles. The data was then presented in the form of a thematic narrative and a categorical matrix to facilitate interpretation. The final stage was reflective and dynamic conclusion drawing, where the researcher continuously reconfirmed the findings until a comprehensive, valid, and meaningful understanding was achieved.

To ensure data validity, this study employed triangulation of sources and methods. Information from students was compared with the perspectives of teachers, schools, and parents, while interview techniques were reinforced with observation and documentation for cross-validation (Moleong, 2000). Through this strategy, the data obtained was not only factual but also credible and scientifically accountable.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Trends in Teenage Learning Style Patterns (Cramming Habits)

This study found that the habit of cramming has shifted from being a mere emergency strategy to a study pattern that is starting to be considered normal and even a "culture" among teenagers at MAN 1 Medan. This habit appears not only before final exams, but also when facing major assignments, group presentations, or surprise evaluations from teachers.

Based on interviews, students exhibit a tendency to study reactively, rather than proactively. They only start studying when they feel threatened by deadlines or grade pressure, rather than out of a desire to understand the material. This is confirmed by Khoiri Pusanto, S.Pd.I:

"They don't actually want to study, but they wait for a feeling of 'pressure' first. If it's not close, they don't start studying. This isn't due to inability, but rather because of their instant and situational mindset."

The most popular study time is late at night, usually from 10:00 PM to past midnight, as students perceive the atmosphere as much more conducive. This was expressed by several student informants, one of whom was Harum Melati:

"At night it's quieter, there are no distractions. So my focus is higher. But I often end up staying up late, and then I'm really sleepy in class the next day."

The types of learning activities they engage in are also different from traditional learning styles. The majority of students don't open textbooks, but rely instead on quickly absorbed digital materials, such as internet summaries, Google searches, short YouTube videos, senior PowerPoint slides, or friends' summary notes in PDF format. Teacher Dewi Zakiah, S.Pd., observed:

"Nowadays, kids are smarter about finding 'quick fixes.' It's not that they don't study, but rather choose the summary. They use YouTube and educational TikTok more often than textbooks."

In fact, some students honestly admitted that they enjoy the time pressure because they feel "more alive" and motivated when they're anxious. This statement came from a student named Azka Ulina:

"If you study far in advance, you don't get the feeling. But when it's seconds before the exam, you're more enthusiastic. It's like an adrenaline rush."

Another interesting finding is that the habit of cramming isn't just driven by academic pressure, but also social pressure. Many students do it because "all their friends are doing it too." Narra Raissa emphasized this:

"If all my friends study all night and then have an exam discussion the next morning, it feels like if we don't participate, we're unprepared. So it's more about environmental influences."

However, not all students agree that SKS is an ideal and healthy study pattern. Some are beginning to recognize the risks. As Humaydi stated:

"I'm not against cramming once in a while. But if it becomes a regular habit, it's dangerous. It makes you tired, stressed, and your memorization quickly fades. I don't think that's the right way to study."

Research findings indicate that the dominant habit of cramming (SKS) among students at MAN 1 Medan represents a reactive, rather than proactive, learning pattern. This pattern aligns with the concept of extrinsic motivation, where students learn not from self-awareness (intrinsic) but from external forces such as fear of low grades or exam pressure (Maarif, 2020). Thus, SKS is not simply a technical issue of study time, but reflects a crisis of learning orientation that focuses on results, rather than process.

The tendency to study late at night indicates that students' learning styles are situational and unstructured, consistent with the theory of self-regulated learning, which explains that students with low self-control tend to procrastinate until the deadline approaches (Suharningsih, 2019). This habit also indicates low metacognition, namely the ability to plan and monitor the learning process independently (Sasmita, 2022).

Interestingly, research findings reveal that advances in digital technology actually reinforce the culture of instant learning. Students no longer read books in depth, but instead rely on quick summaries from the internet, short educational videos, and even AI algorithms. This phenomenon aligns with Supriyanto's (2021) findings, which state that digital technology can accelerate access to knowledge, but simultaneously creates a pragmatic and shallow learning disposition if not accompanied by adequate critical literacy. In other words, digitalization accelerates the learning process, but also shallows it.

Furthermore, the habit of using credits (SKS) is influenced not only by academic pressures but also by horizontal social pressures. Many students feel compelled to follow the habits of their peers to avoid being perceived as unprepared or "less competitive." This aligns with the concept of peer conformity, which is the condition when someone follows group behavior due to pressure from social norms (Supriyanto, 2021). Thus, credits (SKS) have shifted from being merely an individual strategy to a normalized social culture among adolescents.

However, critical awareness has also emerged among some students who resist making credits a primary habit. This indicates a potential shift in awareness toward reflective learning, as explained in transformative learning theory, which enables students to recognize the errors of old mindsets and develop healthier and more sustainable learning habits (Mezirow, 2000 in Maarif, 2020).

The Impact of Trends in Adolescent Learning Style Patterns on Learning Outcomes

Research results show that the trend of cramming (SKS) not only directly impacts students' academic achievement but also has a multi-pronged effect on cognitive performance, physical condition, emotional stability, and long-term learning character development.

Academic Outcomes: Unstable and Declining Achievement

Teacher Khoiri Pusanto explained that students who habitually cram for SKS tend to master material solely for "performance tomorrow morning," rather than for the long term. He stated emphatically:

"Students who cram for exams only memorize it for the exam. Once the exam is over, they've completely forgotten it. That's why their grades are never stable."

This was confirmed by a student named Safwin, who frankly admitted:

"If what they study is exactly the same, they can get a decent grade. But if it's even slightly different, they'll immediately fail. So it's like a matter of luck."

These findings confirm that SKS creates a reliance on luck, rather than conceptual understanding.

Physical Impact: Fatigue, Drowsiness, and Decreased Focus in Class

The habit of staying up late is the most obvious impact of the SKS pattern. This condition is not only felt personally by students, but is also clearly visible to teachers in the classroom. Teacher Dewi Zakiah explained:

"Students who cram all night are very easy to recognize. They usually have droopy eyes, frequent yawning, and some even struggle to sleep while looking down at their desks."

A student named Harum Melati admitted directly: "

After staying up late studying, in the morning my head feels heavy, my eyes sting, and sometimes it's hard to think. I just want to sleep, not study."

This shows that the SKS study pattern has the potential to harm students' performance on exam day or afterward, rather than strengthen it.

Psychological Impact: Panic, Mental Pressure, and Academic Anxiety

Students who use SKS actually live in an academic rhythm full of pressure and anxiety. Dzakhirah Zahra said:

"It feels like time is running out. My heart is constantly racing, and I panic because I'm afraid I won't have time to learn all the material. I feel completely uneasy."

Teacher Vilda, S.Pd., added an observation from an educator's perspective:

"Children who study too close to home are more emotionally unstable. They are easily stressed, sensitive, and less mentally stable when facing exams."

In other words, the credit system (SKS) fosters a pressure-filled pseudo-intelligence, rather than academic calm and confidence.

Character Impact: Loss of Intrinsic Motivation and a Crisis of Learning Independence

The most worrying impact of the credit system trend is the emergence of a mindset among adolescents who study only out of compulsion, not out of an awareness of the importance of knowledge. Khoiri Pusanto offered a profound reflection:

"Children no longer study out of curiosity or a desire to be able to, but out of fear of bad grades. This is dangerous, because their motivation to learn is entirely determined by external pressure, not internal determination."

The confession of a student named Azka Ulina further reinforces this finding: "

If there's no exam tomorrow or urgent assignment, I rarely study. It doesn't feel urgent."

This finding suggests that the credit system is not only a matter of poor time management, but has created a crisis of learning principles, where discipline, reflection, and curiosity are starting to disappear, replaced by a pragmatic, instant culture.

Research findings indicate that the habit of cramming (SKS) has impacts not only academically but also affects students' cognitive, psychological, physical, and affective dimensions. This confirms that SKS is a form of short-term survival learning, a learning style that only aims to meet immediate demands, rather than building long-term competencies.

Academically, students who use SKS tend to experience a decline in conceptual understanding, as the learning process focuses solely on memorization, rather than understanding. According to Antara et al. (2019), this tendency toward surface learning prevents students from transferring knowledge in-depth,

resulting in unstable academic performance. The results of this study are consistent with these findings, as students rely on quick memorization that only lasts for the exam, not for the long term.

Psychologically, the habit of SKS has been shown to increase academic stress and cognitive anxiety, especially when students feel pressed for time and lose control of the learning process. This reinforces the view of Vera and Amalia (2023) that the time pressure created by SKS triggers academic panic, a psychological condition that reduces concentration, self-confidence, and calm thinking during exams. Thus, credit-based learning (SKS) is not only cognitively harmful but also disrupts students' emotional stability.

The next impact is on long-term learning motivation and character. Based on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan in Maarif, 2020), students who study solely out of compulsion or fear of low grades tend to have weak extrinsic motivation and are vulnerable to losing intrinsic motivation, namely the drive to learn driven by personal awareness and interest. This is evident in the field, where students only study when exams are approaching, rather than out of curiosity or academic commitment.

Another equally significant impact is a decline in student discipline and time management. According to Suharningsih (2019), failure to systematically plan study time will lead students to react impulsively rather than reflectively. This finding aligns with research, which found that credit-based learning (SKS) fosters a pragmatic, instantaneous, and intolerant learning style.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the credit-based learning trend not only has short-term impacts in the form of inconsistent grades but also has the potential to create a generation of students with an instantaneous mindset, poor learning management, low academic resilience, and a minimal sense of ownership of knowledge. This emphasizes the need for educational interventions based on intrinsic motivation, self-learning discipline, and time literacy from an early age.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the habit of cramming has become a dominant trend among teenagers at MAN 1 Medan as a reactive response to academic pressure, the influence of digital technology, and poor time management. This learning pattern stems not from strategic planning, but from extrinsic motivation that is situational and short-term in nature. This confirms that cramming is not simply a learning method but also reflects a shift in learning culture toward an orientation toward instant gratification and results, rather than process and understanding.

The impacts of the cramming trend have been shown to be predominantly negative, ranging from decreased academic achievement stability, weakened conceptual understanding, physical disorders due to sleep deprivation, to increased academic stress and decreased intrinsic motivation. In the long term, this pattern has the potential to produce a generation of students who are pragmatic, unadaptive to in-depth learning processes, and vulnerable to losing academic resilience.

Theoretically, these findings strengthen the study of the shift in learning styles of digital teenagers, which are increasingly transactional and instantaneous, while also opening new opportunities for the study of motivational engagement, digital literacy, and reflective learning discipline in the context of modern education. Practically, the results of this study confirm the need for learning interventions based on intrinsic motivation, time management literacy, and the gradual strengthening of learning habits (not emergencies before exams).

Further research is highly recommended to explore pedagogical interventions based on reflective learning models, healthy gamification, or adaptive digital literacy that can replace the credit system culture with more sustainable, disciplined, and meaningful learning patterns.

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