

The Use of Instagram and Tiktok in the Gen Smart Program For Academic Writing Ethics Education: A Study of First Year Students

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Abstract: Ethical academic writing is a fundamental competency that should be developed early in higher education, particularly in health-related vocational education, where academic integrity is closely linked to professional ethics. This study aims to examine the use of Instagram and TikTok in the GEN SMART (Generasi Sadar Menulis Akademik Beretika) Program as social media-based educational platforms for promoting ethical academic writing among students of the Nutrition Department at Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang. A descriptive quantitative design with an evaluative approach was employed using non-participant digital observation to analyze interaction metrics on the Instagram and TikTok accounts @tulisituatis. Data included likes, saves, and views of educational content posted between 25–26 October 2025, with recapitulation conducted up to 27 October 2025. These quantitative data were supported by participant testimonials to strengthen the interpretation of engagement and program impact. The findings show that Instagram helps maintain consistent exposure to educational messages with stable engagement, while TikTok achieves higher audience reach and interaction due to its dynamic short-video format. Testimonials further indicate positive perceptions of the program, including increased awareness of academic ethics and integrity, as well as improved understanding of technical aspects of ethical academic writing

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Introduction

Academic writing is a fundamental competency that students are expected to possess from the beginning of their higher education. However, in practice, students' readiness to meet the demands of academic writing remains limited (Jimenez et al., 2024). Observational findings in the Nutrition Department of Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang suggest that the difficulties are not merely technical, but also relate to students' limited ability to construct and articulate ideas in a coherent and meaningful academic form. This condition indicates a gap between academic demands and the insufficient level of students' literacy (Khairani et al., 2025). This limited ability is influenced by the lack of sustained academic writing habits as well as insufficient practical and continuous guidance (Ati et al., 2025). In addition, students in the early stages of their studies still encounter difficulties in understanding

citation techniques and the concept of plagiarism as essential components of academic writing ethics (Sinaga et al., 2025). This finding underscores that issues in academic writing are not solely related to technical skills, but also involve the development of academic ethical awareness.

Conventional learning approaches that tend to be one-way are considered insufficient to address these issues, particularly among digital-native students who are accustomed to interactive and technology-based learning environments (Juliane et al., 2017). Therefore, a shift in learning strategies is required, moving from mere knowledge transfer toward more participatory, contextual, and engaging learning experiences. In this context, social media holds potential as an educational medium that aligns with students' learning characteristics and preferences (Rahman et al., 2023). Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok offer visual, concise, and easily accessible content formats, which can enhance understanding while simultaneously expanding the reach of learning materials (Febriyanti et al., 2025; Satrianingsih, 2023).

Several previous studies have shown that the strengthening of academic literacy and writing ethics is generally implemented through e-learning approaches, online modules, or structured learning management systems (Gay et al., 2025). These approaches have been proven effective in enhancing students' understanding of academic integrity (Ni'mah & Widodo, 2022). However, these approaches tend to focus primarily on cognitive aspects and have not yet optimally addressed student engagement, awareness, and changes in writing behavior. Moreover, the use of popular social media as a medium for educating academic writing ethics in the form of integrated and sustained programs remains relatively limited, particularly in the context of vocational higher education in the health sector.

Based on these conditions, several research gaps remain that warrant further investigation. First, studies that specifically evaluate the effectiveness of social media as a medium for academic writing ethics education remain limited. Second, there is still a lack of studies that integrate digital engagement analysis with aspects of student awareness and behavioral change simultaneously. Third, there is a limited development of social media-based educational programs that are systematically designed and comprehensively evaluated, particularly within the context of vocational health education. Therefore, this study examines the utilization of Instagram and TikTok in the GEN SMART (Generasi Sadar Menulis Akademik Beretika) Program as a medium for educating academic writing ethics among students of the Nutrition Department at Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang. This study focuses on analyzing the level of engagement, the improvement of academic writing ethics awareness, and indications of changes in students' writing behavior based on their responses and testimonials after participating in the program.

Research Method

The study was conducted in several stages, beginning with the introduction of the GEN SMART Program to first-year students of the Nutrition Department at Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang during new student orientation activities. At this stage, students were informed about the program objectives and encouraged to follow the official Instagram and TikTok accounts @tulisuuetis as part of early academic writing ethics education. Subsequently, the researchers produced and disseminated educational content on ethical academic writing tailored to the characteristics of each social media platform and published it gradually and consistently through the @tulisuuetis account. While first-year students were

the primary target audience, the content was made publicly accessible to allow wider dissemination among senior students and the broader academic community.

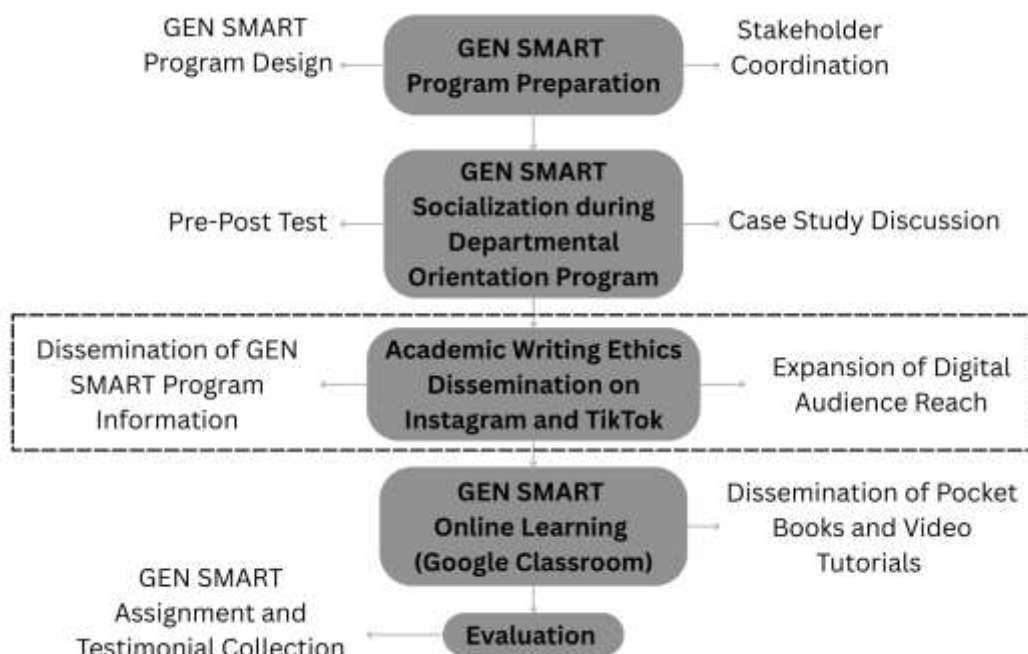


Figure 1. Workflow of the GEN SMART Program

The unit of analysis in this study was each individual content post published on the Instagram and TikTok accounts @tulisituets, which generated measurable interaction metrics from users. The data sources consisted of quantitative secondary data derived from these interaction metrics. This study did not involve respondents directly; instead, the participants were social media users who interacted with the content of the GEN SMART Program. The majority of followers were first-year students from the Nutrition Department at Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang who participated in the orientation program, although broader audience participation was also possible due to the public accessibility of the content. Data were collected manually through non-participant digital observation using the built-in analytics features of Instagram and TikTok (such as insights and post statistics), without the use of external APIs. The data collection process involved compiling key interaction indicators from each content post, including the number of likes as an indicator of audience response, the number of saves on TikTok as an indicator of content relevance and user interest, and the number of views or replays as an indicator of content reach. All data were recorded manually based on the information displayed on each post at the time of observation.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including the calculation of minimum, maximum, and mean values for each interaction indicator. In addition, engagement rate analysis was conducted by comparing interaction metrics (likes, saves, and views) relative to total reach to assess content effectiveness. A comparative analysis between platforms (Instagram and TikTok) was also performed to identify differences in audience engagement patterns. The results were presented in tabular form and descriptive narratives to illustrate audience reach and engagement with the GEN SMART

Program content. This analysis served as the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the digital publication strategy and formulating recommendations for further development of educational content. This study employed a descriptive quantitative design with an evaluative approach, aiming to assess the effectiveness of digital publication in the GEN SMART (Generasi Sadar Menulis Akademik Beretika) Program through Instagram and TikTok. This design was selected to describe the level of audience reach and engagement with educational content on ethical academic writing disseminated online.

Result

This study used a descriptive quantitative evaluative approach to assess the effectiveness of social media utilization in the GEN SMART Program through interaction metrics on Instagram and TikTok accounts (@tulisituatis). Data were collected through non participant digital observation of 22 posts published during the study period.

Table 1. Summary of Instagram Posts and Interaction Metrics

Category	Total Posts	Highest	Lowest	Mean
Likes per Post	22	38	2	9-10

Table 1 shows that Instagram engagement was relatively moderate, as reflected by the number of likes per post, which ranged from 2 to 38. The average engagement was approximately 9–10 likes per post, indicating a fairly consistent but not highly intensive level of audience interaction. This suggests that while the content was able to attract attention from followers, the overall engagement level remained within a moderate range, potentially influenced by factors such as content format, posting time, and audience behavior on the platform.

Table 2. Summary of TikTok Posts and Interaction Metrics

Category	Total Posts	Highest	Lowest	Mean
Likes per Post	22	128	1	27
Saves per Post		82	0	9
Views per Post		2326	111	660

Table 2 indicates that TikTok generated higher engagement than Instagram across all metrics. The average number of likes reached 27 per post (maximum 128), while saves averaged 9, indicating that users found the content relevant and worth revisiting. Additionally, the average number of views reached 660, with a maximum of 2,326, reflecting broader content reach and higher visibility. Overall, these findings highlight TikTok's effectiveness in disseminating educational content through engaging short-form media.

Table 3. Recapitulation of Participant Testimonials toward the GEN SMART Program

Type of Testimonial	Focus of Participant Feedback	Testimonial Descriptions	Results
Program Benefits and Relevance	Benefits of the Activity and Increased Knowledge	Participants perceived that the GEN SMART Program provided substantial new knowledge and helped them understand scientific writing as well as academic ethics relevant to the needs of students at the beginning of their academic studies.	40% of participants stated that the activity was beneficial.
Ethical Awareness and Academic Integrity	Ethics, Honesty, and Plagiarism	Participants emphasized the importance of honesty, academic integrity, and an understanding of plagiarism through real examples of writing errors and practical ways to correct them.	37% stated that the ethics and plagiarism section was the most memorable.
Technical Understanding of Academic Writing	Citations, References, and Mendeley	Participants felt assisted in understanding how to write, cite sources, and compile proper reference lists, including the use of reference management applications.	21% liked the citation and Mendeley materials.
Attractiveness of Delivery and Methods	Clarity, Interactivity, and Engagement	The presentation of the material was considered clear and interactive, enhancing understanding through discussion and relevant contextual examples.	22% rated the delivery as engaging.
Memorable Learning Activities	Discussions, Practice, Quizzes, and Supporting Media	Discussion sessions, hands-on practice, quizzes, and media support such as Instagram/TikTok “Tulis Itu Etis” were considered to enhance both engagement and understanding.	1% identified discussions; 5% quizzes; and 5% supporting media.
Notes and Feedback from Participants	Scope for Activity Development	Some participants noted that certain sessions still had room for improvement in terms of interactivity and engagement..	5% provided feedback

Table 3 shows that the majority of participants responded positively to the GEN SMART Program. Approximately 40% of participants stated that the program was beneficial, indicating its perceived usefulness in supporting academic learning. In addition, 37% of participants identified ethics and plagiarism material as the most memorable, highlighting the importance of these topics for first-year students. Meanwhile, 21% of participants emphasized technical writing materials, such as citation and the use of Mendeley, as valuable components of the program. Furthermore, 22% of participants reported that the learning delivery was engaging, suggesting that the educational approach used in the program was effective in capturing students' attention. Overall, these findings indicate that the GEN SMART Program was well-received and provided meaningful learning experiences for participants.

Discussion

Based on the descriptive quantitative evaluative research design, the findings indicate that the use of social media as an educational medium in the GEN SMART Program was able to generate measurable levels of digital engagement and positively contribute to students' awareness and understanding of ethical academic writing. Data were obtained through non-participant digital observation of Instagram and TikTok accounts @tulisuetis, conducted from 25 to 26 October 2025, with recapitulation on 27 October 2025. The primary target audience consisted of first-year students from the Nutrition Department at Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang who were introduced to the program during new student orientation activities, although broader participation may have occurred due to the open-access nature of social media. These findings highlight that digital platforms can function not only as communication tools but also as effective educational media capable of facilitating knowledge dissemination and supporting early academic adaptation among students.

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that audience interaction on Instagram was relatively consistent, with no extreme variation in the number of likes across posts, ranging from 2 to 38, and an average of approximately 9–10 likes per post. This relatively stable engagement suggests that Instagram is effective in maintaining continuous exposure to educational content, particularly through repeated and structured message delivery. The consistency of interaction reflects sustained audience responsiveness to academic writing ethics content and indicates that Instagram can serve as a reliable medium for reinforcing learning over time, especially for first-year students who are still adapting to academic writing standards (Kurniawati et al., 2024). In contrast, the findings in Table 2 demonstrate that TikTok generated higher engagement and broader audience reach compared to Instagram, as reflected by higher averages in likes, saves, and views across posts. The relatively high number of views and saved posts indicates that the content was perceived as relevant, engaging, and useful by users, suggesting a deeper level of interaction beyond simple exposure (Salma & Albab, 2023). This highlights the effectiveness of TikTok as a platform that leverages short-form audiovisual content to attract attention and increase content visibility, thereby facilitating wider dissemination of educational messages and enhancing user engagement, particularly among younger audiences who prefer dynamic and visually appealing formats.

The differences in engagement patterns between Instagram and TikTok emphasize the importance of adopting a multi-platform approach in educational interventions, as each platform offers distinct advantages in content delivery and audience interaction. Instagram

plays a significant role in maintaining consistency and continuity of educational messaging through repeated exposure, while TikTok provides greater opportunities for expanding reach and enhancing engagement through interactive and visually driven content. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that the integration of multiple digital platforms can improve the effectiveness of educational communication and optimize learning outcomes (Antari, 2025; Nandito et al., 2025). Furthermore, the results presented in Table 3 indicate that participants responded positively to the GEN SMART Program, with the majority of participants perceiving the program as beneficial in improving their understanding of academic ethics and scientific writing. Materials related to ethics, honesty, and plagiarism were identified as the most memorable, followed by technical aspects such as citation practices and the use of reference management tools, indicating that the content was aligned with students' academic needs. In addition, participants perceived the learning process as engaging and interactive, supported by various learning activities such as discussions, practical exercises, quizzes, and integration with social media content, which contributed to a more meaningful and comprehensive learning experience.

Overall, the alignment between high digital engagement and positive participant responses suggests that the educational content delivered through the GEN SMART Program was not only widely accessed but also effectively understood and appreciated by the audience. Engagement indicators such as likes, saves, and views, supported by participant testimonials, indicate an increase in awareness and comprehension of academic writing ethics (Pratama et al., 2023; Ramadhina et al., 2025; (Irwan & Misidawati, 2025). Although this study did not directly measure behavioral changes, the strong audience response and positive learning experiences represent an important initial step toward the development of ethical academic attitudes and practices, particularly within vocational education in the health sector.

Recommendation

Based on the research findings, the GEN SMART Program is recommended to be continued and sustainably developed as part of early academic orientation for first-year students, particularly in vocational higher education in the health sector, given the high level of digital engagement and positive participant responses. The multi-platform approach should be optimized by strengthening the role of Instagram in maintaining the continuity of educational messages and utilizing TikTok to expand audience reach through more dynamic and contextually relevant audiovisual content. Enhancing interactivity through online discussions, writing practice, quizzes, and feedback on students' writing samples is also recommended to enrich the learning experience. Furthermore, future studies should employ more comprehensive evaluation designs by integrating digital engagement indicators with direct assessments of changes in attitudes and academic writing behaviors, as well as expanding the research context across different study programs and higher education institutions to strengthen the generalizability of the findings.

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