Article

Social Media use among Indonesia's Generation Z: A Case of University Students in Bandung, West Java

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Abstract

Globalization cannot be detached from the processes and results of global interconnections. As one of the most remarkable products of globalization, the internet appears to have become an important part of many people's lives. Among the youth, social media is of particular prominence. This study explores the engagement of a group of university students aged 20 to 23—also known as the Generation Z—in using social media. The study, conducted in one university in Bandung, specifically attempted to inquire into ways in which the students perceive social media to impact their lives. Questionnaire and individual interviews were used as data collection techniques. Analysis of the data pointed to a high degree of 'addiction' to social media use among students in general. The students also revealed both positive and negative impacts of social media use, thus confirming the idea that social media is a double-edged sword that needs to be dealt with carefully and critically.

Keywords

generation Z; globalization; identity; social media

INTRODUCTION

Globalization cannot be detached from the processes and results of global interconnections. Consequently, the idea is often related to the notion of global citizenship, where people around the world are connected, enabling them to engage with the cultural others. Globalization has changed the face of many cultures and transformed many aspects of human life—both at the individual and the societal levels, affecting the socio-cultural, linguistic, economic, political, technological, ecological, and even the individual levels. The impacts of globalization are simply far-reaching.

In relation to technological development arising from globalization, the internet appears to have played a crucial role in improving communication across borders. The internet has also been considered as the core of all the technological products in this globalized era. One of the most popular and influential products of the internet, especially among the youth, is social media. Social media can provide individuals with easy and instant access to connect with people and

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to obtain information from different places across the globe. In light of this, social media can change not only people's lifestyles and habits but also the way they see the world through different ideas and values they are exposed to. Yet, the acceleration of information can be difficult to deal with, as individuals are constantly faced with the challenges of having to make sense of 'foreign' thoughts. The bombardment of new discourses opened up by the internet can put individuals in a state of ambivalence and lead to the loss of a stable sense of self—an identity crisis (Hall, 1996).

A number of studies (e.g., Delfanti & Arvidsson, 2019; Guta & Karolak, 2015; Van Dijck, 2013) have shown that social media can indeed affect individuals' sense of self and their self-presentation. Situating their discussion in the American context, Delfanti and Arvidsson (2009), in their book *Introduction to digital media,* elaborate in great details how social media contributes to processes of identity formation and reformation and liken the social media to a stage that allows people to 'perform'. Meanwhile, Guta and Karolak (2015) investigated social media use among Saudi women and explored how this virtual space was used as a tool to express and negotiate their identities. Similarly, Van Dijck's (2013) study examined how different online platforms, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, was able to construct the social media users' personal and professional identities. Most of the research studies that connect social media to identity issues, however, have been done in the overseas contexts; thus, to contribute to this important and timely discussion, this study aims to investigate social media use among Indonesia's Generation Z. Specifically, the study inquires into the perceptions of a group of university students in Bandung, West Java, aged 20 to 23 regarding their engagement on social media and the impacts these virtual spaces may have on their individual selves. This case study is expected to provide better understanding of the role that social media plays in young people's lives, while also raising awareness of how such virtual spaces can lead to one's identity

crisis. The present study is also expected to contribute to the existing literature on the globalization-identity nexus, as studies that inquire into the aforementioned connection is still scarce in the Indonesian context.

While definitions of globalization vary, the idea has frequently been associated with a process of expanding connection— be it social, cultural, political, economic, or even personal—to a broader level, 'compressing' the world we live in. Globalization has often been perceived as being marked by three distinct features: shrinking space, shrinking time, and disappearing borders (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). The notion 'shrinking space' points to the ways in which people's lives are impacted by events that are actually happening in other parts of the world. 'Shrinking time', on the other hand, refers to how technologies are changing the ways people communicate and carry out transactions, making these interactions possible in real-time across national borders. Closely connected to the aforementioned two concepts is 'disappearing borders', which illustrates the breaking down of national borders, hence enabling various forms of transcultural flows to take place—from goods, information to ideologies. These three distinct features cannot be detached from the technological dimension of globalization.

As one of the most influential products of globalization, the internet has enabled the development of other technologies and has created new virtual spaces for people to connect and interact. One of such popular spaces is social media. Social media itself has been defined as web-based communication tools that enable people to interact with each other by sharing and consuming information (Nations, 2019). Although their mutual relationship is not always visible, Rantanen (2005) perceives 'media' and 'globalization' as being likened to a horse and carriage, or a computer and screen. Yet, the emergence of the internet has also been seen to pose social problems. As Khiabany (2003) points out, the internet has created digital divide, which he refers as having to do with "poor telecommunication infrastructure in the developing country where it acts as a

major barrier to the internet access" (p. 145). However, the issue arising form the internet is not merely about connection quality but also about access to information and communication. People who do not speak English, for example, are most likely to have less access to information on the internet that those who speak it. Further, Khiabany views the internet as being dominated by media giants.

One such 'domination' is indicated by Facebook, one of the most used social media platform worldwide (Hootsuite & We Are Social, 2020). As social media provides virtual space for the people to connect, communicate, and interact with each other and their mutual friends through instant messaging, it has thus also become a place where they can enjoy themselves and have a good time (Correa, Hinsley & Zúñiga, 2009; Schroeder, 2016). Social media has been used by people to express themselves, share ideas and to voice various concerns; for the activists, for example, social media can be a tool to organize a real or virtual demonstration for political, social and economic reforms.Wood, Bukowski and Lis' (2015) study indicates that social media can also contribute to shaping youth's emotional experiences and assist in healing personal issues such as loneliness and relationship maintenance. However, this virtual space has also been shown to lead to relational issues, such as misunderstanding, cyber-bullying, unwanted contact and unintentional personal disclosure.

More recent studies (e.g., Delfanti & Arvidsson, 2019; Thomas, Briggs, Hart & Kerrigan, 2017) point that social media is an important space for identity building. A study by Thomas et al., for instance, reveals how social media has been used to construct certain identities. Referring to the international students they interviewed, the study highlights different dimensions of these students' selves; the communication barriers that the students faced in their new environment appeared to have made them more articulate on social media. Likewise, a study by Guta and Karolak (2015) shows that social media has provided Sau-

di women participating in the study a space for self-expression as well as for negotiating cultural boundaries and social norms. The negotiation tactics varied from using nicknames, uploading personal photos to using first names only to hide their family names. Social media appears to have brought some degree of 'freedom' to these women. Guta and Karolak's findings resonate with Delfanti and Arvidsson's (2019) argument that social media provides a space for individuals to express other dimensions of their identities, even those deemed socially unacceptable. Referring to Erving Goffman's work on self-representation, Delfanti and Arvidsson maintain that social media serves as one of the 'theatres' in which people 'perform' or represent their selves in public; individuals' performance is liken to an actor in the front stage and the back stage. People are regarded to occupy the front stage when they are conscious that they are being watched, and they are performing to project a desirable image to the 'audience'. The front stage, therefore, is how people (re)present themselves to the world. The back stage, on the other hand, is a space where the actor tends to relax, drops his or her face and step out from the character performed in the front stage.

In relation to Goffman's theorization of self-representation, Lindgren's (2017) study points that, indeed, individuals' identities offline do not always conform to the identities constructed online. However, according to Delfanti and Arvidsson (2019), the type of identity displayed online may vary within different contexts depending on, for example, the platforms used. As Van Dijck's (2013) study demonstrates, people tend to foreground their professional identity on LinkedIn, while on Facebook they tend to emphasize the personal dimension of their identities. To sum up, as a prominent product of globalization, social media has been proven to serve many functions, from political agenda to self-expression and identity building. Situated within these multifarious discourses regarding social media, this study aims to explore the social media engagement of a group of Indonesia's Generation Z and identify ways in which they perceive

social media to have impacted them.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative case study research design. Involving a class of final-year, English major undergraduate students aged twenty to twenty-three—also known as Generation Z—studying in Bandung, West Java, this research employed two data collection techniques: online questionnaire and individual interviews. The questionnaire was distributed for the purposes of collecting demographic information and identifying the trends in regard to social media use among the thirty participants. The questionnaire comprised both closed- and open-ended questions. Then, individual interview sessions were carried out with six participants whose responses were considered particularly insightful and deserved further exploration. All of the participants were given pseudonyms.

In relation to the questionnaire, the main purpose was to gather the participants' basic profiles, such as names, age, hobbies and information related to their engagement on social media. The questionnaire was written in *Bahasa Indonesia* and was divided into three sections. The first section sought basic information regarding their social media use, comprising four questions: (1) how long have you been using the internet?, (2) which social media platform(s) do you usually visit?, (3) for what purpose(s) do you use social media?, and (4) how long do you spend daily on social media? With each of these questions, a number of choices were given. The second section covered ten Likert-scale items, indicating a particular stance (i.e., strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, strongly agree) towards the statements given. The ten statements are as follows: (1) I regularly use social media, (2) Social media is an important part of my life, (3) Being on social media makes me feel become part of a global community, (4) Social media broaden my horizons, (5) Social media sometimes creates confusion, (6) Social media influences the way I see myself, (7) Social media influences the way I see other people/cultures and my surrounding, (8) Social media sometimes creates inner conflicts, (9) Social media can change my values and beliefs, (10) I feel I am more expressive on social media. The third section of the questionnaire consisted of three open-ended questions: (1) what do you usually follow or read on social media?, (2) what do you feel to be the most positive impact(s) of social media use?, and (3) what do you feel to be the most negative impact(s) of social media use? The questionnaire thus provided insights into the student participants' engagement with social media.

The individual semi-structured interview sessions, on the other hand, were aimed at exploring further some of the responses given through the questionnaire, as these responses were considered insightful and critical. Among the questions posed in the interviews were: how do you epress yourself on social media?; do you think you become more critical because of social media? do you think social media tends to affect you more positively or negatively? What kinds of confusion and inner conflicts have you experienced as you engage on social media? The interviews were conducted in *Bahasa Indonesia* and were then transcribed. Relevant excerpts were translated and presented in the next section.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Students' social media engagement

This section presents the findings in regards to the students' social media engagement in relation to three aspects: duration, platforms choice, and reasons for the engagement.

Being in their early twenties, more than half of the students stated in the questionnaire that they have been using the internet for more than ten years, and less than three per cent said that they have only been using it for less than five years. This means that for most of the students, their first exposure to the internet happened around their last years of primary school. As such, these student participants can be classified

as 'digital natives', which, according to Palfrey and Gasser (2013), are people who are born after 1980. These people "were raised in an environment in which they were surrounded by technology and who possess technological skills different from those possessed by the members of the prior generation" (p. 1). The students' digital nativeness are further supported by their regular use of social media, in which eighty-five per cent stated that they are frequent users of social media. The data indicated that each and everyone involved in this study are engaged with social media, whether regularly or not. Less than seven percent indicated that they spend less than one hour daily on social media. The majority, in fact, spend more than three hours daily online. Indeed, as a product of globalization, social media seems to have become an inherent part of many of the digital natives' lives. This statement is also reflected in an interview session with Neta, who sees social media as playing an important role in her life:

> I am starting to feel that I need social media because there are many things that we need to know from social media including people's ways of thinking—people's viewpoints—and also because, today, there are many jobs that involve social media use... (Neta, 08/10/2020)

As Neta hinted, social media appears to have become an important part of Generation Z's lives, mainly because of the wider opportunities it has to offer—from job opportunities to being exposed to different views of the world.

Further, with the mushrooming of social media sites, internet users are offered a wide range of platforms that they can engage themselves in. Among the most popular social media sites frequently visited by the students are Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. In the questionnaire, the participants were able to select more than one platform.

Each social media platform, as the participants indicated, offers different functions. One participant, Ghita, admitted she was drawn to Instagram because of the microblogging features:

> Instagram recently offers more contents resembling microblogs. From only a platform for sharing photos, activities and the like, to a platform to share knowledge like psychology, parenting etc., and as a person who uses Instagram more often than Google, I feel helped by users who are creating microblogs on daily basis, so how they share their writings in unique ways makes me more interested as an Instagram user. (Ghita, 22/10/2020).

The second most used social media platform based on Figure 1 is Twitter. Some of the participants revealed that Twitter allowed them to be updated with recent trending topics, and it is also considered to be more "private", so they felt less hesitant to share opinions on Twitter. For a number of these participants, Twitter is also seen to provide a medium to vent, which helps to reduce their stress levels. As Cilla said:

> I used social media as my temporary junk, so that's why my tweets don't stay for too long because I will delete them later on....
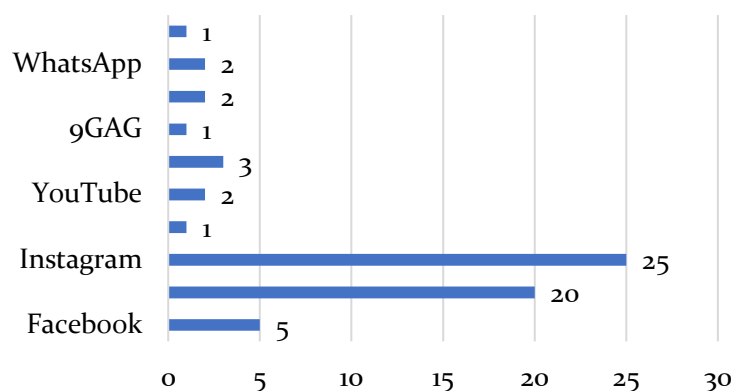

Figure. 1 Students' choice of social media platforms

> My tweets are like a reliever for me…. my tweets are never really important…. So, I mainly use social media as a stress-reliever… (Cilla, 05/11/2020).

Corresponding to Cilla's statement, Whiting and Williams's (2013) study indicated that venting is one of the methods used by their respondents to express opinions, as they liked to express their opinions anonymously and to criticize others anonymously, as well, and they enjoyed the opportunity to vent on social media.

The third most popular social media in this study is Facebook. The data revealed that Facebook was the first social media platform that many of the students engaged with. However, the popularity of Facebook appears to be fading, as some of the participants indicated. This is because, according to them, other platforms such as Twitter and Instagram are able to serve functions that Facebook does not offer, apart from the fact that Twitter and Instagram are perceived as the "current trends".

The data pointed to four main reasons for the students' engagement on social media: (1) entertainment purposes, (2) knowledge and information-seeking purposes, (3) social networking, and (4) career-related purposes. The first two reasons were particularly popular, opted by more than ninety per cent of the students. This indicates that most of the students expect social media contents to be both entertaining and informative. In regards to the entertainment aspect, the questionnaire responses pointed to varied forms of entertainment, ranging from funny posts, celebrity gossips, horror threads, animal videos, fan accounts, anime-related contents, relatable tweets, memes to games. As for the informative aspect of social media, the participants mostly sought news, tutorials, educational articles, opinions about current issues and events, self-development as well as business-related information. The fact that social media has been used as a source of information resonates well with Whiting and Williams' (2013) study. Most of the participants in their study also used social media to seek information, self-educate, get how-to instruction, get help with maths,

and learn new things. My study and that of Whiting and Williams' point to the fact that students in today's world can gain a variety of knowledge outside the classroom, namely through the exposure of social media, which offers a wide range of contents.

Almost two third of the participants conveyed that they used social media to establish social networking. Indeed, as discussed earlier, the purpose of social media at first hand is to connect users with other users. As these participants responded, social media has made it easier for them to communicate with friends, broaden their social connection, and to easily communicate with family living overseas—all pointing to an important feature of globalization: shrinking space.

Interestingly, only one person used social media for career-related purposes. Her reason was as follows:

> The only reason why I need social media is because there are companies that require us to follow their social media accounts when we are applying for jobs, so I don't have any choice other than having a social media account (Jessie, 17/11/2020).

As Jessie indicated, some companies today use social media as a way to promote themselves. An increasing number of professions are also involving the use of social media in the field, for example, copywriters or social media admins of business companies. However, when the participants were asked whether they felt engagement with social media made them become part of the global community, almost half of them responded 'not sure'. It follows that social media tends to serve personal use rather than utilized as a tool to enter and participate in the global community.

Perceptions towards social media use

The student participants perceived social media as presenting two sides of a coin, having both positive and negative dimensions. Among the positives, social media has been regarded as a tool to connect with others, to develop one's self, to relieve one's stress and to express one's self. On the negative side, social media has been blamed for redu-

cing real communication and productivity as well as creating a 'busybody culture' and triggering confusion, ambivalence and inner conflicts.

Highlighting the good side of social media, the fact that it eases communication across borders in real-time has been emphasized by many participants. One participant, Dina, said that, because of social media, she can be connected to people living in different parts of the world, which enabled her to "see the world more broadly". Apart from enabling connection with others located far away, social media also opened up the door for some participants to be able to join various online communities sharing similar interests. Through these communities, they were then able to join in the conversation and discussion on relevant current issues; and this, in turn, opened up another door for them to learn and broaden their knowledge, as well as expand social networking.

Similarly, the idea that social media provides a tool for self-development has been mentioned by many of the participants. For them, social media is a popular site to turn to when looking for "what's in" ("*kejadian yang lagi rame*"), to borrow Dita's words. Through social media, the participants said that they were able to know other people's opinions on particular issues and became more aware of current issues and trends. One participant, Nenda, felt that social media enabled her to "gain knowledge everyday". A number of the participants also felt that they became more open-minded and more critical because of social media; this is because social media exposed them to a wide range of opinions and stances, through which they were able to analyze, compare and evaluate. As Nida said, social media allowed her to "broaden her horizons and become more open-minded in seeing a particular phenomenon from different perspectives". Data from the questionnaire revealed that seventy per cent of the participants confirmed that social media affected the way the see other people and cultures.

Another participant, Alfian, pointed that social media enabled him to obtain knowledge and perspectives that may be difficult to get elsewhere; he implicitly referred to the kind of knowledge or perspectives that are not commonly talked about either in the home or in formal institutions like the university, either because they were considered taboo or because the issues were too controversial. Alfian's statement indicated that social media is able to provide non-mainstream narratives and discourses, which are too dangerous and 'political' to raise in the traditional mass media, such as the television and newspaper.

It turns out that, for many of these digital natives, social media—not the library—provides them with unlimited source of knowledge and information. Through it, they are able to know what are currently happening on the other side of the world and learn about other cultures and other ways of seeing the world, all of which correspond to Kumaravadivelu's (2008) notion of the shrinking space. Consequently, social media has been perceived as a tool to expand one's horizons and to educate one's self.

Further, as social media is able to provide a vast array of information on wide-ranging topics, this online space has also been perceived by some participants as allowing them to "briefly escape the reality", providing them with "an alternative universe". As Cilla said it:

> I mainly use social media to look for entertainments, as a way to 'briefly escape the reality'. To simply distract me from things that makes me anxious. Most of the time, if I happen to find the right contents, it works.... It also broadens my perspective on a lot of issues. Of course, not to accept them as is. But different perspectives conveyed on social media can make us think further and learn more.... Apart from that, I also turn to social media as a quick way to untangle jumbed thoughts...

The forms of entertainments mentioned by the participants varied, from accessing humorous posts, celebrity gossips, horror threads, animal videos, fan accounts, anime-related contents, relatable tweets, memes to games—entertainments that allowed them to "laugh out loud". Because social media can provide 'an alternative world',

it has often been associated by many of the participants as a stress-reliever.

In relation to social media as a site for self-expression, one participant, Rian, believed this online space to offer "opportunities for unlimited creativity", providing multifarious ways of expressing one's self. As Delfanti and Arvidsson's (2019) study indicated, social media is seen to provide a space in which user can anonymously express different dimensions of their identity, even those that may be considered socially unacceptable. Yet, not every participant felt that they are comfortable expressing their thoughts on social media. In fact, when posed with the Likert-scale statement 'I feel I am more expressive on social media', almost half of the participants felt unsure, as shown in Figure 2.

Even though almost half of the participants were ambivalent on this issue, individual interviews with selected participants, Neta and Saleh, seemed to support the statement put forward by Delfanti and Arvidsson (2019), where users can anonymously express their other sides of identity that tend to be socially unacceptable. In Neta's case, she felt that she can be her truest self through pseudonyms that she created on Twitter. On Twitter, she felt that she could express and speak up on issues that she criticized. Meanwhile, on other platforms, such as Instagram, she felt rather hesitant to be completely open because she was exposed to followers who are personally quite close to her. Neta said:

Even though my identity on Twitter is a fabricated identity, I can be my truest self. To be honest with you, even though I rarely speak up, I am critical when it comes to judging something ... I feel safe when someone doesn't know who I am while I am talking, and I feel uncomfortable if I speak up in a condition where people know the critical side of me. On Twitter, no one knows who I am, where I study, which study program, what my face looks like because I never post a single photo on Twitter, but on Instagram, I'm hesitant to speak up because my followers on Instagram are mostly people whom I personally know. (Neta, 08/10/2020)

Another point raised by another participant, Saleh, relates to the function of social media as "a getaway from realities". He stated that social media provided a place for self-expression by letting people know his statuses:

Okay, so in reality, I don't have a real medium to express myself because I cannot play music, I cannot sing, I cannot write. My point is: I don't have a medium to express myself. So where do I go? Yes, I go to social media. For example, If there is a song I currently love or a song that speaks for my current state, I will share it on social media. (Saleh, 18/11/2020)

Yet, not everyone is comfortable expressing themselves on social media, as pointed by Lulu in the interview. Instead of being more expressive, she tended to display the opposite attitude, limiting the contents she wanted to post on social media. Referring to Goffman's works that Delfanti and
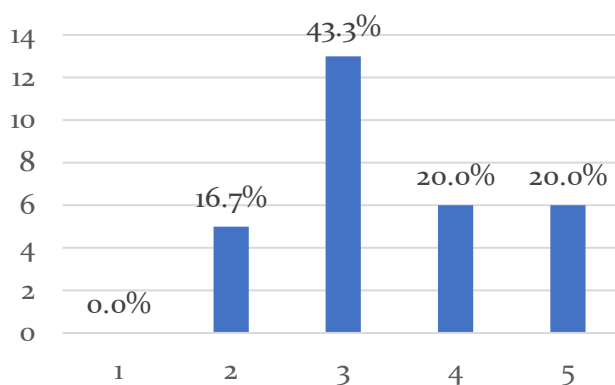

Figure. 2 'I feel I am more expressive on social media'

Arvidsson (2019) have drawn on, social media is one of the 'stages' that allows individuals to represent their selves through a continuous work of construction. 'Stages' here can be 'front stage', where an individual is conscious of being watched by other people and show their identity to impress other people, or 'back stages', where an individual steps out of the character or identity that an individual performs in the 'front stages'. Lulu was entirely aware that social media is a "front stage" for her since, on social media, people can build a perception towards her. Based on that awareness, she chose to filter what she wanted to post on social media and preferred having real interaction.

Corresponding to Neta and Lulu's cases above, Delfanti and Arvidsson (2019) note that the types of information that we publicly share may vary within different online contexts, depending on the platforms and target audiences. A number of participants, indeed, confirmed that the ways they expressed themselves are different on different platforms. Ghita, for example, stated that, on Instagram, she tended to be careful on contents that she shared since she could be exposed by the people she knew. This was because she had wider connection with people on Instagram than on Twitter, and she realized that digital footprints existed. So, to prevent unwanted incidents, she chose to limit contents shared on social media and to share only "light" contents. For Ghita, social media is a "scary place" to share sensitive issues. The data presented here point to how different social media platforms can influence ways in which they express themselves, hence corresponding to Gee's (2000) statement that people tend to display different dimensions of their identities, depending on the contexts they are in.

Like two sides of a coin, social media also poses negative impacts to individuals. One of the negative impacts of social media felt by the student participants was that it reduced real communication. Quoting Hana's words, she stated that social media made her less sociable: "So, sometimes we don't socialize although we're together; every one is busy with their phones". Social media can be distracting, reducing the quality of face-to-face communication and "real human engagement". In line with this, a study by Przybylski and Weinstein (2012) also suggest that "the presence of mobile phones inhibited the development of interpersonal closeness and trust and reduced the extent to which individuals felt empathy and understanding from their partners" (p. 244). From the data and the recent studies above, we can infer that social media can indeed affect real communication with people close to us.

Another negative impact perceived to be attached to social media is reducing productivity. Many participants blamed social media for making them procrastinate. As Firda said: "sometimes I'm having such a good time [on social media] that I forget the time and become unproductive". Apparently, social media can create some sort of 'addiction' for its users and lead them to forget priorities. While social media can be a resourceful tool to seek knowledge and information, it is undeniable that there are also unacceptable contents. Due to these dual sides, people are blatantly confronted with the choice of 'the good' and 'the bad'. As Rian mentioned, "social media tends to make many people forget that there is Allah The All-Seeing". Another factor mentioned by some of the participants that contributed to slowing down productivity is fake news or hoax circulated online. Such news, of course, are unimportant for students in general, but they might spend time to fact-check them anyway. For this reason, Brooks (2015) argues that social media poses a powerful distraction mechanism.

Further, many of the students admitted that social media contributed to creating a 'busybody culture'. As pointed out by Calista, social media makes her overly curious ("*jadi kepo*"), wanting to constantly check on what other people are doing. Borrowing Ghita's words:

> In my opinion—I don't know if it is just me—but I feel insecure...looking at others' more fascinating lifestyles in comparison to my own, or looking at others' more beautiful physical appearances and better skills... (Ghita, 22/10/2020).

Likewise, Jessie admitted that social media had negatively affected her mental health and confidence level because she was constantly 'forced' to compare helself to others through the posts that they shared. While social media provides the space for individuals to express themselves, the data also revealed that such space can also create new problems for individuals, such as feeling insecure, unconfident and lacking gratitude, hence affecting one's psychological well-being and mental health. Social media, as some said it, can be "toxic". In view of this, a study by Boer, Stevens, Finkenauer, de Looze and van den Eijnden (2020) points that social media addiction decreased life satisfaction, while also leading to social comparisons between the adolescent participants.

Another negative aspect attached to social media, as articulated by more than seventy per cent of the participants, is that it triggers confusion and a state of ambivalence. With information circulating on social media at such an unprecedented speed, it is of no surprise that one may feel overwhelmed or 'bombarded'; it is even more so when this fast-flowing information contains ideas and values that do not sit well with one's cultural norms and beliefs. The "confusion" revealed by the participants appears to be rooted in their not knowing which stance to take when confronted with critical issues. As Fadhlan stated, social media caused him to be more easily fixated on other people's opinions instead of taking his own stance. His statement also resonated with many of the other participants. Their inability to decide their own stance led them to a state of ambivalence, which, again, signals the "toxicity" of social media for some individuals. Taking this issue further, sixty per cent of the participants admitted that the confusion triggered by social media, at times, led to inner conflicts. The multifarious discourses and the many voices articulated on social media, as Delfanti and Arvidsson (2019) have shown, can indeed have an impact on the way individuals see themselves, affecting their sense of belonging.

CONCLUSION

This study has pointed to the fact that social media is a double-edged sword, presenting itself with both opportunities and threats. While the participants acknowledged that social media is a resourceful, informative and entertaining 'tool', they were also aware that social media is "addictive" and "toxic", which can affect individuals' psychological well-being and mental health. At a more personal level, the massive information has been shown to create a state of ambivalence within the students' selves, due to the multitude of contradicting ideas, values and beliefs expressed by the many different kinds of users. Although Khiabany (2003) mentions that diversity on social media is a myth, in the case of the participants in this study, diversity is *real*. It seems that the English language that the students are equipped with has, to some degree, also contributed to their experiencing ambivalence, as the language enables them to access much wider possibilities of online sites, hence being exposed to the multifarious ideas and discourses. Such circumstances can consequently lead to the loss of a stable sense of self, or as Stuart Hall (1996) calls it 'identity crisis'.

Further, the explosion of social media in many people's lives has, to certain extent, brought about transformations in social and cultural landscapes, where social comparisons and 'interrogation' of other people's affairs seem to have become normalized. Reiterrating Delfanti and Arvidsson's (2019) argument, social media provides a space for individuals to be who and what they want to be, conveying different dimensions of their identity. Social media provides a 'stage' for them to perform. However, while Delfanti and Arvidsson's study tend to associate social media as the 'front stage', the findings in this study point that social media has been used by the participants as both the 'front' and the 'back' stage, in which they not only express themselves and are aware that they are being 'watched', it also provides them a space to relax and enjoy themselves as they are being entertained.

Social media, as this study indicates, has impacted many people's lives, whether willingly or unwillingly. It has changed the way we communicate, seek information, and express ourselves, bringing much ease to our lives. However, social media also poses danger and negative impacts on the users. It is, therefore, of critical importance that users be smart and critical when engaging with social media, as it is a double-edged sword that needs to be 'harnessed' properly and appropriately. Hopefully, this study has helped in raising awareness of the 'hidden powers' embedded in social media and of the importance of critical thinking skills in engaging with the multifarious ideas and values on the internet. More research studies—be it of qualitative or quantitative nature—on the globalization-identity nexus need to be done in the Indonesian context, so that a more comprehensive picture can be built in regard to how Indonesia's Generation Z has been impacted by social media. It would also be interesting to see how the youth's engagement in these virtual spaces is transforming the nation's linguistic, sociocultural, economic and political landscapes.

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