



The Role of Social Media in Increasing Social Interaction in the Sustainable Development Goals of Indonesian Higher Education

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Abstract. Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for enriching social interaction and fostering community engagement within higher education institutions. This study examines the role of social media in enhancing social interaction to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the context of higher education in Indonesia. By analyzing existing methodologies, case studies, and potential challenges, this research effort aims to provide insights into the use of social media for promoting sustainable development initiatives. Findings suggest that effective use of social media can significantly enhance awareness, collaboration, and participation in SDG-related activities. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn offer unique opportunities for universities to expand their outreach, encourage engagement, and disseminate information about SDG campaigns. The paper explores the integration of social media into institutional frameworks, focusing on best practices and strategies to maximize impact. Examples from selected Indonesian higher education institutions demonstrate successful implementations and highlight the benefits of leveraging social media for advancing SDGs. However, issues such as digital literacy, resource constraints, and alignment of social media strategies with institutional goals are also discussed. In conclusion, this research emphasizes the importance of adopting a comprehensive and strategic approach to utilizing social media in higher education to strengthen sustainable development efforts in Indonesia.

Keywords: Social Media, Sustainable Development Goals, Higher Education, Digital Literacy, Community Engagement

1 Introduction

Technology is developing rapidly, and companies continually innovate to meet consumer needs (1). Internet access is crucial for supporting connectivity. According to Hootsuite (2023), Indonesia has 212.9 million internet users, representing 77% of the population. Moreover, 353.8 million internet users access the internet via mobile phones. Mobile phones, a significant technological advancement, facilitate connectivity, particularly through social media. Hootsuite (2023) reported 167 million social

media users in Indonesia, transforming interaction and communication on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok.

Social media significantly impacts governments, businesses, and society (2). Government social media accounts disseminate policies and information across various sectors. Boyd and Ellison (2007) noted that social media shapes digital identities, allowing self-expression (4). In higher education, this fosters academic collaboration, information sharing, and community building for SDGs.

Social media's influence extends to expanding professional networks (9). It facilitates real-time communication and interaction, connecting universities with students, faculty, alumni, and external stakeholders. However, social media also alters social interaction patterns. Syahrah (2020) found both positive and negative impacts on interaction, including loss of manners and increased depression and anxiety from high social media use (12). The phenomenon known as digital fatigue emphasizes balancing online and offline interactions to avoid overwhelm (14).

Despite social media's benefits in advocacy and social movements, it is also a source of misinformation or "infodemic." This can influence public perception and reduce interpersonal relationship quality, shifting dynamics towards digital communication. Social media's dual role as a communication tool and a cultural force highlights its complex impact on social and psychological patterns, making it a critical area for research in understanding modern cultural and social evolution.

2 Research Method

This research adopts a qualitative approach to explore social media's role in enhancing social interaction and supporting SDGs in Indonesian higher education. A qualitative case study design focuses on several universities actively using social media for academic and SDG initiatives. The purposive sample includes students, lecturers, and administrative staff involved in social media use for SDG goals.

Data collection methods include participant observation and literature study. Observations involve examining interactions on university social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, recording content types, user responses, and engagement levels in SDG-related discussions. This systematic observation identifies interaction patterns, collaboration forms, and social dynamics.

The literature study involves analyzing academic articles, reports, and documents discussing social media in higher education and SDGs. Reviewing previous research, policy reports, and international organization publications, the literature study identifies key findings, trends, and gaps, providing a theoretical framework for data interpretation.

Data analysis employs thematic analysis, involving rereading data for overall understanding, coding data into main topics, grouping codes into broader themes, and interpreting findings. This iterative coding process ensures consistency and relevance, identifying key themes and their interrelationships.

This methodology offers in-depth insights into social media's role in promoting social interaction and supporting SDGs in Indonesian higher education, combining direct

observation and literature analysis to identify social media's specific mechanisms influencing social dynamics and sustainable development goals.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Social Interaction and Participatory Communication

This research aims to explore how social media enhances social interaction and supports SDGs in Indonesian higher education, grounded in social science and communication theories. Social interaction theory views interactions as the basis of social structure. Digital platforms enable real-time, two-way communication, shaping identity and interaction. Goffman's (1959) "presentation of self" concept highlights how users curate shared content to shape identity and interact with social networks, enhancing academic collaboration and community building.

Social media as a communication platform allows participation in constructing social meanings and norms related to SDGs. Shared content on social media contributes to collective understanding of SDG issues. In higher education, social media promotes SDG awareness and action, changing perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable development. Participatory communication theory (3) emphasizes active individual participation for social change. Social media facilitates active engagement in discussions, information sharing, and collective action for SDGs in higher education, fostering collaboration and local initiatives.

Manuel Castells' Network Society concept illustrates the transformation driven by ICT, where digital networks create complex social relationships. Social media facilitates personal communication and public discourse, organizing social movements and spreading ideas globally. It raises awareness of issues like education, health, and sustainability, connecting diverse individuals to share knowledge and experiences. Universities and NGOs leverage social media for global collaboration, addressing SDG challenges.

3.2 Understanding Network Society via Social Media

Castells' Network Society describes the shift in social organization due to ICT, characterized by digital connectivity changing interactions and operations (7). Unlike hierarchical structures of industrial societies, network societies thrive on decentralized, networked communication and organization. ICTs transform power, culture, and identity dynamics, with networks dominating social relationships. Social media platforms exemplify this, influencing public opinion, shaping cultural norms, and facilitating collective action.

Social media algorithms personalize content, increasing user engagement but raising ethical concerns about privacy and bias (13). Despite these challenges, social media's ability to amplify marginalized voices and catalyze collective action underscores its transformative potential in a network society.

3.3 Higher Education, SDGs, and Network Society

Universities play a vital role in advancing sustainable development through education, research, and community engagement (15). They facilitate cross-disciplinary collaboration and innovation, contributing to SDGs through research, community projects, and partnerships. The connected nature of universities enables global idea exchange and collaborative solutions to global challenges. Social media platforms raise SDG awareness, mobilize support, and drive advocacy efforts, engaging diverse audiences in discussions and actions related to SDGs.

Universities leverage digital networks for research-based innovation, capacity-building programs, and policy advocacy, collaborating with stakeholders across sectors and disciplines. Digital literacy is crucial for effectively using technology in various contexts, including academic environments (8).

4 Results and Discussion

This research explores social media's role in enhancing social interaction and supporting SDGs in Indonesian higher education through participant observation and literature studies on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The results demonstrate that social media significantly promotes SDGs through various mechanisms.

4.1 Facilitating Real-Time Communication and Interaction

Social media enhances real-time communication and interaction among students, lecturers, and staff, thereby improving academic collaboration and information sharing. It allows users to form digital identities and express themselves through shared content, which enriches social interactions within higher education environments. This immediacy in communication fosters dynamic academic discourse and facilitates the creation of supportive communities. Such interactions contribute to a collaborative spirit, crucial for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting collective efforts and knowledge sharing. Overall, social media acts as a catalyst for engagement and cooperation, aligning educational objectives with global sustainability initiatives.

4.2 Dissemination of Information About SDGs

Social media is a potent tool for disseminating information about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Government and university social media accounts are instrumental in sharing digital policies and updates related to SDGs. Campaigns that utilize hashtags and leverage influencer support have proven effective in enhancing advocacy and increasing community engagement with SDG issues. This highlights social media's capacity to raise awareness, mobilize support, and drive action towards achieving sustainable development objectives. By harnessing its wide reach and interactive features, social media can significantly contribute to building a more informed and active global community focused on sustainability.

4.3 Supporting Campus Community Involvement in SDGs

Social media enhances campus community involvement in local SDG initiatives by facilitating active participation in discussions and collective actions. Universities use these platforms to promote innovation and implement solutions addressing global challenges, thereby reinforcing the critical role of higher education in achieving SDGs. Case studies from Indonesian higher education institutions illustrate how effectively leveraging social media can drive progress towards sustainability goals. These examples demonstrate how social media can be a powerful tool for engaging students, faculty, and staff in SDG-related activities, fostering a collaborative environment that supports and advances sustainable development efforts on campus

4.4 Challenges of Social Media Use

Despite its benefits, the research identifies several challenges associated with social media use:

Digital Fatigue:

Digital fatigue, a consequence of excessive social media use, arises from the constant bombardment of information and notifications. This unrelenting stream can overwhelm individuals, making it difficult to focus or engage meaningfully in social interactions. As a result, users may experience diminished interpersonal connections, as the quality of their interactions suffers. Over time, this fatigue can contribute to the development of psychological issues such as depression and anxiety, as individuals struggle to manage the mental and emotional load of digital engagement. Addressing digital fatigue involves strategies to balance online and offline activities, and prioritizing self-care and mindful consumption of digital content.

Spread of Misinformation:

Social media facilitates the swift dissemination of misinformation, often termed an "infodemic," where false or misleading information spreads rapidly and widely. This phenomenon can significantly impact public perception, as individuals may come across and believe inaccurate data, leading to widespread confusion. The rapid sharing of such misinformation can skew opinions, distort facts, and influence behaviors in ways that undermine informed decision-making. This problem is compounded by algorithms that prioritize sensational content, making it challenging for users to discern credible sources. Combatting misinformation requires critical media literacy, fact-checking, and responsible sharing practices to mitigate its effects on society.

Changing Social Interaction Patterns:

A growing preference for digital communication over face-to-face interactions can significantly impact the development of strong interpersonal relationships. While

digital platforms facilitate convenience and connectivity, they often lack the depth and nuance of in-person interactions, which are crucial for effective communication and emotional bonding. This shift can hinder the development of essential social skills, such as empathy, non-verbal cues, and conflict resolution. As individuals increasingly rely on digital modes of communication, they may struggle to build and maintain meaningful relationships, which are vital for emotional well-being and social growth. Balancing digital and face-to-face interactions is essential for nurturing healthy, supportive connections.

4.5 Need for Digital Literacy and Critical Skills

To address the challenges associated with social media, enhancing digital literacy and critical skills among users is essential. This approach ensures responsible information consumption and fosters a more informed and engaged campus community. Universities need to implement comprehensive policies and educational programs designed to develop these skills, which include evaluating the credibility of sources, understanding digital ethics, and managing online behavior effectively. By promoting a balanced approach to social media use, institutions can help students navigate the digital landscape more responsibly and constructively, thereby supporting their overall academic and personal growth.

4.6 Lack of Detailed Evidence on Social Media's Contribution to SDGs

A notable limitation of this research is the insufficient detail and concrete evidence regarding social media's specific contributions to achieving SDGs within Indonesian higher education. The findings tend to be broad and lack empirical data to substantiate the observed impacts. Without detailed evidence, it is challenging to precisely measure and validate how social media initiatives are effectively advancing sustainability goals. This gap highlights the need for more rigorous research and data collection to provide a clearer understanding of social media's role and its tangible effects on SDG progress in the higher education sector.

4.7 Future Research Directions

Future research should aim to provide a more in-depth analysis and gather empirical data to validate the findings related to social media's impact on SDGs in higher education. Detailed case studies and longitudinal studies can offer concrete evidence of how social media specifically advances sustainability goals. By exploring the specific mechanisms through which social media influences sustainable development outcomes, researchers can enhance understanding and effectiveness. This approach will not only validate existing observations but also provide actionable insights for optimizing social media strategies to better support and achieve sustainable development objectives within the higher education sector.

5 Conclusion

This research concludes that social media holds significant potential for enhancing social interaction and supporting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within Indonesian higher education. Social media platforms facilitate effective communication and collaboration among students, lecturers, and staff, enabling the wide dissemination of information and active community involvement in sustainability initiatives. By leveraging these platforms, universities can foster a collaborative spirit and drive engagement in SDG-related activities, thereby advancing global sustainability objectives.

However, challenges such as digital fatigue, the spread of misinformation, and shifting interaction patterns must be addressed to maximize social media's benefits. Digital fatigue can overwhelm users, while misinformation can skew perceptions and hinder informed decision-making. Additionally, a preference for digital over face-to-face interactions may affect the quality of relationships and social development. To counter these issues, enhancing digital literacy and implementing responsible social media use policies are crucial. Universities should focus on developing these skills among their communities and strategically utilizing social media to promote SDGs. By doing so, they can build connected, informed communities that recognize and act upon the importance of sustainable development, ensuring that social media serves as a powerful tool for positive change.

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