Communication Models during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Post-Pandemic Implications: A Comparison of "Digital Natives" and "Digital Immigrants"

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Abstract

Social distancing and stay-at-home have become inevitable during the Covid-19 pandemic. Governments around the world have set measures to prevent people from gathering. With fewer opportunities to spend time together in person, staying socially connected has become more difficult. This paper discusses how the pandemic affected Indonesia's use of digital communication methods, as well as the post-pandemic implications. It draws a distinction between digital natives and digital immigrants. The data is gathered from 101 Indonesians between November 12 and 15, 2021, when the pandemic in Indonesia begins to subside and people begin to prepare to resume their offline activities.It explores how the communication medium used to engage with friends and relatives who do not live in the same house has changed as a result of the pandemic, and whether digital natives or digital immigrants have increased digital communication. The study then delves into what these changes mean for society and digital media studies in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Keywords: digital communication, digital native, digital immigrant, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Good communication is, according to studies, the foundation of a successful interpersonal connection and, when used correctly, is extremely helpful [1], [2]. Communication can also have a long-term influence on an individual's overall motivation. As a consequence, it is vital for everyone to cultivate a culture of open communication with others, whether distant or near. The present COVID-19 pandemic, however, has had a tremendous influence on interpersonal communication. As physical encounters and conversations are restricted, people must find new means to communicate with one another.

Governments throughout the world have enacted social distancing and stay-at-home regulations to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. While particular regulations vary by nation, government strategies to combat the coronavirus pandemic typically include closing schools, non-essential physical stores and enterprises, restricting public transit and venues, and restricting social occasions. Public interaction has greatly lessened under these situations. As opportunities to meet in person decreased, new challenges for remaining socially connected arose. This article examines people's alterations in digital communication based on data acquired around two years into the pandemic's breakout in Indonesia, as well as the societal implications towards the post-pandemic.

As of November 4, 2021, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia has reported 4,246,802 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 143,500 deaths [3]. To address this critical situation and limit the spread of infections, the Indonesian government implemented Community Activities Restrictions Enforcement (CARE). CARE, also known as *PemberlakuanPembatasanKegiatan Masyarakat* (PPKM), is a barricade sanitaire policy implemented by the Indonesian government beginning in early 2021 to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. CARE is divided into levels, with level 4 denoting the most stringent limitations, with all non-essential activities forbidden. Meanwhile, level 1 denotes the new normal, with strict health protocols, such as required masks and immunization cards for passengers, still in place. At the time of writing, the majority of Java and Bali are classified as CARE level 2.

Indonesia has one of the highest percentages of internet users in the world. Nonetheless, its penetration is comparatively low if compared to other Asian countries. As of December 2019, there were 171.26 million active internet users in Indonesia [4], and the figure is expected to rise substantially in 2021, reaching 201.37 million [5]. Two years of COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a considerable increase in digital media usage among individuals of all ages, as consumers spent more time at home owing to coronavirus lockdowns [6], [7]. In order to portray the models of communication used by Indonesians during the pandemic, the following questions will be addressed in this essay: How did the digital natives and the digital immigrants' habits of using digital communication differ as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? During these times, which generation was more inclined to decrease or increase their digital communication? What implications do these changes in people's digital communication have for society and digital media studies in the wake of the pandemic?

Marc Prensky [8] coined the term "digital natives" and "digital immigrants". Digital natives are to characterize the generation of individuals who grew up in an era of omnipresent technology, such as computers and the internet. Digital natives get acquainted with technology and computers from a young age and regard technology as an inherent and vital aspect of their daily lives. Digital immigrants refer to someone who grew up before the digital era People are often called digital immigrants if they were born before 1985. In contrast to digital natives, who are considered to have been reared alongside evolving technologies, they were introduced to technology later in life and accepted its usage. It is assumed that digital natives have advanced technical digital capabilities and ways of learning for which traditional schooling is inadequate and unsuitable.

2. Method

An anonymous online survey was distributed. To get a broad sample of responses, the questionnaire was sent over using digital communication channels (WhatsApp Group and Line Group) to various age populations, between November 12 and 15, 2021. The survey was targeting Indonesian digital natives and digital immigrants.

The respondents were asked if their communication frequency with friends and relatives outside of their houses increased, remained constant, or decreased throughout the epidemic. They were then asked to name three communication methods that they had mainly used during the outbreak. In addition, they were asked to list three online services that they frequently use. They were also questioned whether they felt comfortable interacting online and if they missed face-to-face conversation. The final question queried if they would choose digital communication over face-to-face communication once the pandemic ended.

3. Discussion

A total of 101 respondents completed the survey voluntarily, all of whom resided within the Indonesian territory. The respondent's range in age from the digital natives (under 38) to the digital immigrants (over 39), with 70% identifying as female and coming from 13 of Indonesia's 34 states. There is a significant difference in the numbers of respondents between those who are digital natives (64%) and those who are digital immigrants (36%). Because the survey was released through digital communication channels, this shows that digital native respondents are more responsive than digital immigrants in responding to the survey distributed through digital communication.

There is, in general, a slight increase in digital communication among the respondents. 38% of respondents indicated they had increased their digital communication,

29 % said they had stayed the same, and 34 % said they had decreased their digital communication (Figure 1).
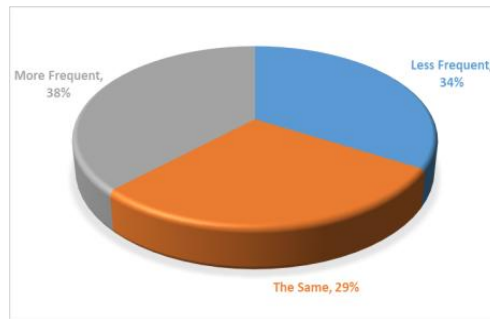

Figure 1:People's digital communication behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic

This data reveals that 20 months into the pandemic in Indonesia did not significantly boost respondents' usage of digital communication.
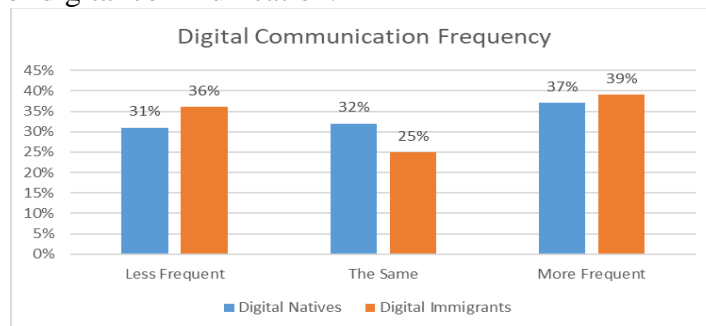

Figure 2: The Frequency of Digital Communication between the Digital Natives and the Digital Immigrants when compared to before the pandemic

When the frequency is broken down by age, it is evident that both digital natives and digital immigrants tend to have more frequent digital communication than before the pandemic. The proportion of digital immigrants who increased their digital communication is slightly higher than digital natives. This runs counter to the widely accepted idea that digital natives use digital communication more than digital immigrants. This study supports the conclusion that digital immigrants are as digitally literate as digital natives.

Respondents were then asked to name three types of digital communication that they used (Figure 3). According to the data, 97% of respondents used WhatsApp messaging the most. This was followed by video calls (56.4 %), Instagram and voice calls (both 40.6 %). It is worth noting that respondents are still interested in using phone conversations as a form of communication. The utilization of phone conversations and video calls was chosen by 97% of the total responses (56.4% for video calls, and 40.6% for voice calls). It may be inferred that individuals still prefer oral communication over written communication when they are communicating with friends and family. The data also demonstrates that none of the respondents used short messages, a popular means of communication a decade ago, to communicate. It notifies us that, while the service is still present on everyone's phones, no one is using it to communicate nowadays.
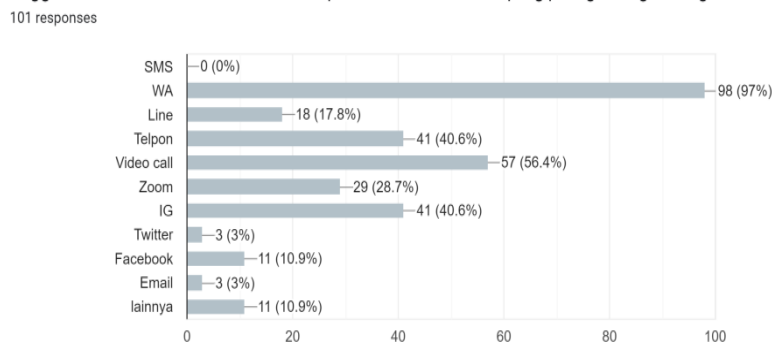
Figure 3: The most common means of communication used to communicate with friends/relatives/relatives who do not reside at the same household (the respondents may select up to three choices)
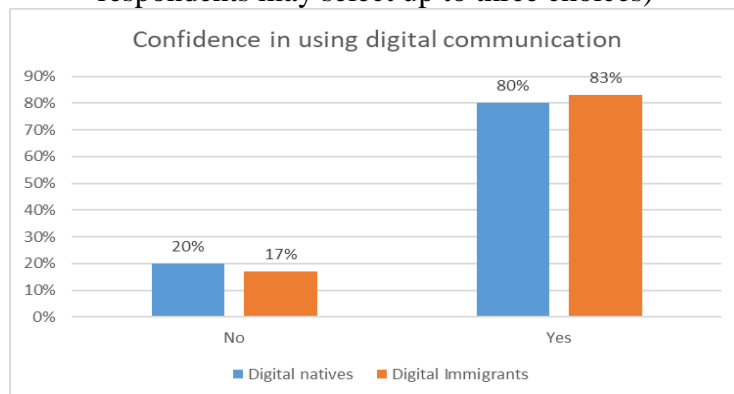

Figure 4: The level of confidence in using digital communication

When questioned about their level of confidence in using digital communication, both groups had nearly comparable percentages. Both groups were at least 80% confident in utilizing digital communication. The percentage of digital immigrants was even slightly higher (83%) than the percentage of digital natives. Again, this contradicts the commonly held belief that digital natives are more confident in digital communication than digital immigrants. This study lends credence to the evidence showing digital natives are not more digitally literate than digital immigrants.

The vast majority (83 %) of respondents said they miss face-to-face communication. When this data was split down by age, it is evident that digital immigrants miss face-to-face interaction more than digital natives. Almost all (97 %) of digital immigrant respondents said they missed non-digital communication.
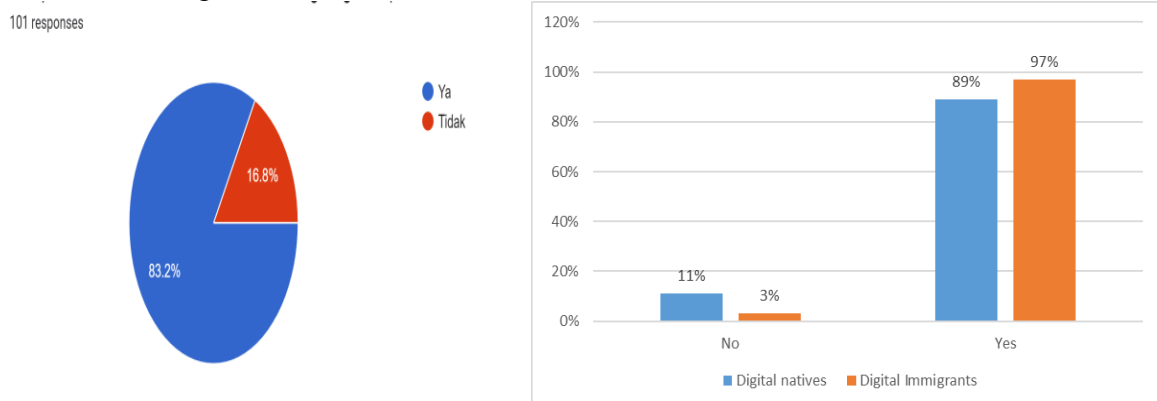
Figures 5: Missing in-person communication
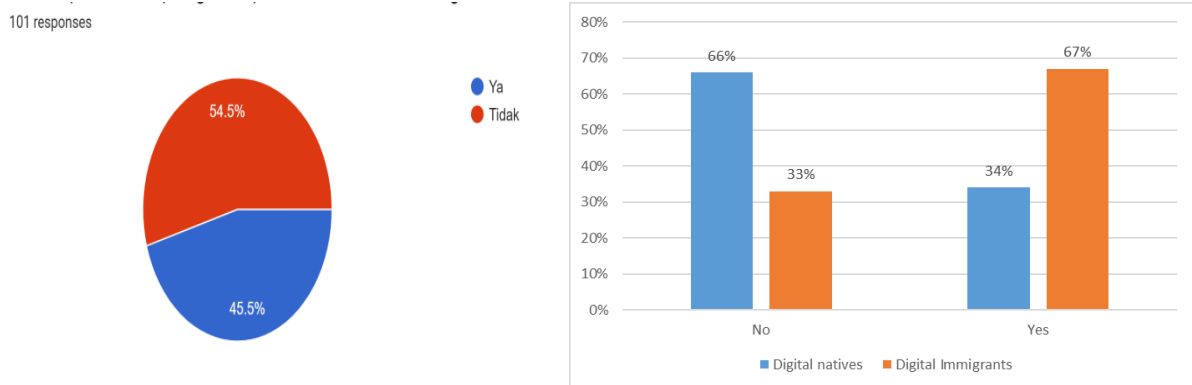
Figures 6: Whether respondents prefer to use digital communication in the aftermath of a pandemic

Respondents were evenly divided between maintaining digital communication and having in-person conversation after the pandemic. 54.5 % of respondents said they did not want to continue using digital communication and preferred in-person conversation. However, when the groups were divided by age, an interesting pattern emerged. The majority of digital natives (66 %) favor in-person conversation over digital communication. The digital immigrants, on the other hand, prefer digital communication over in-person conversation.

4. Conclusion

Despite the fact that this is only a snapshot of the current situation in Indonesia, the following conclusions are significant:According to the findings of this study, both digital natives and digital immigrants use digital communication as frequently and with the same level of confidence. This result tend to counter the assumption that digital natives utilize digital communication more than digital immigrants. A growing body of studies calls into doubt the existence of the digital native and their ability to be technologically adept [9], [10][11]. These researchers revealed that digital natives have a limited comprehension of technology and that little knowledge they do have is typically limited to the potential and use of basic office functions such as emailing, text messaging, and Internet surfing. [9]. The findings of this study may also refute the generally held belief that if there is a generation of digital natives, there is also a generation of digital immigrants that lack this skill. According to McNaught et al. [12], the so-called digital natives were not necessarily more technologically oriented than so-called digital immigrants.

This study discovered that, while individuals use digital communication, they still prefer oral conversation over written communication. After all, even when it is done via phone conversations and video calls, oral communication is still regarded as the best.

While everyone misses in-person connection, the majority of people still choose digital communication over in-person engagement once the pandemic is finished. This is particularly true for digital immigrants. It demonstrates that people are hesitant to leave their comfort zone. The two-year pandemic has established a comfort zone for digital communication, and once there, people are hesitant to return to face-to-face relation.

5. References

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