

Chapter 2

Self–Comparison: The Self in Digital World

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the author is interested in studying more about self-comparison through social media; especially in Jakarta, Indonesia. In Indonesia, social media are commonly used and widely used by various groups. As many as 93% of Internet users in Indonesia are accessing Facebook. Jakarta is even referred as the capital of a text-based social media. The use of social media can be influenced by the collective culture in Indonesia. In this case social media is not just a tool but also the social environment, in which social interaction occurs. This is also influences how individuals view themselves. The topic of the psychological effects of social media has been much discussed. A lot of research conducted on the effect of social on development of self-concept and including self-esteem. Social media becoming a place for comparing oneself to others and it turn out it has a great effect.

INTRODUCTION

Mashall McLuhan, communication theorist, coined the phrase, “the medium is the message” (Steers, Wickham, & Acitelli, 2014). Steers and colleagues stated that McLuhan did not mean to imply that individuals should ignore messages communicated through a certain medium, but that people should not only be aware of a medium’s obvious properties but also be aware of how it subtly influences culture. He argued that important technological advances have the potential to become extensions of the people using them and, in turn, may redefine human interactions.

The use of social media is growing rapidly worldwide. Brenner and Smith (2014) found that Facebook and Twitters were the most popular social media websites among Indonesian emerging adults. Facebook is the most popular social media all over the world (Steers et al., 2014). Social media is used by various age groups. Kimbrough, Guadagno, Muscannel, and Dill (2013) argue that social media users usually are young people, especially women. Statistics showed that the biggest users groups of Facebook are teens and emerging adults; young emerging adults over the age of 18 years occupy 42% of total users,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1856-3.ch002

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followed by the older emerging adults aged 25-34 years at 21% (Sandra 2012). Kemp (2011) suggested that Indonesian internet users are some of the most social people on earth and Indonesian youth see social media as an everyday *necessity*. These youths will readily sacrifice other 'luxuries' to ensure their phones have sufficient credit to access mobile data. Indonesian youths between the ages of 13 and 24 years old have the highest level of interactions through the internet when compared to other cohorts. Comparing these youths, Indonesian emerging adults are the highest users of social media. Arnett (2006) defines emerging adulthood as a specific phase around the ages of 18 to 25. Emerging adulthood is characterized by instability and the search for stability and transition. The transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood is a crucial period in the formation of self-concept.

Self is an important part of human. The self relates to how we see ourselves and it also helps us to adapt to the environment. It is formed from the interaction between the potential that exists within us and within the environment. The environment might include parenting style, schools, neighborhoods, and the peer group. The digital world is becoming part of our environment. This aim of this chapter is to examine how the effects of social media on the self. The use of social media is massively increasing. This phenomenon can affect the formation of self. Social media allows people to easily view, access, and know information about other people's lives. It can also lead to upward or downward self-comparison. This comparison can affect how we see ourselves. This is the concern of this chapter, particularly in relation to social media use.

BACKGROUND

Mazzoni and Zanazzi (2014) described changes in global market that have affected social structure, specifically the transition from communication medium to another might have changed the personal need for social integration, which allowed people to find new channels of communication and to maintain their social networks. One well known social networking website in Indonesia is Facebook. Arakali (2015) reported that approximately 63 million people in Indonesia access Facebook at least once a month in 2015. This year also marked the culmination of mobile phone use. Indonesia has the 3rd largest country population accessing Facebook, after United State and India; the percentage of Facebook users from Indonesia who access the platform via mobile phones is higher than in any other country. By the end of 2015, it is estimated that users of social media will reach 100 million, and will continue to increase in 2016. Furthermore, Indonesia will reach the top five of internet users in 2017, overtaking Japan. Social media is like a two-sided coin. On one hand, social media can help us build social networks, expanding social interaction, but on the other hand, social media also have some risks that could affect aspects of human life, whether cognitive, affective, or behavioral. Sandra (2012) suggests that good self-concept is a result of good interaction in the cyberspace and also in the real environment.

The need to control the use of social media. In 2013, Japan's Ministry of education estimates that about 518,000 children in Japan were addicted to internet and should be rehabilitated (Samakow, 2013). The Government was concerned that this addiction would disrupt children's development. One way to deal with addiction is to send children to Internet fasting camps, where there is no internet connection. This camp tries to encourage children to communicate directly with others. This is an important rehabilitation because children and adolescents who use the internet intensely are more likely to experience depression, obesity, and developmental disorders.

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