Social Media Utilisation and its Implications for Student Ethics in Higher Education

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Abstract

Social media has become an integral part of the educational life of higher education students in Indonesia. Its use provides a variety of benefits, ranging from facilitating access to information, collaboration between students, to facilitating the exchange of ideas. However, in the perfection of its benefits, social media also poses serious challenges related to digital ethics, including the problem of cyberbullying, the spread of hoaxes, and privacy violations. Research on the impact of social media use shows a significant influence on learners' behaviour and achievement, both positive and negative. The importance of paying attention to how learners interact, manage content, and their adherence to digital ethics rules and norms is highlighted. Through an in-depth understanding of the usage patterns and impact of social media on students' ethics, this research aims to provide important insights for students, lecturers, and educational policy makers. It is hoped that the results of this research will not only provide a foundation for responsible policies on social media use in educational settings, but also trigger students' awareness of the impact of their online behaviour on the real world.

Keywords: utilisation, implications, social media, ethics, students, higher education

1. Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of everyday life (Febriana et al., 2023), and the educational context in Indonesia is no exception. The use of social media by tertiary students has become an increasingly common phenomenon. In the academic context, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other based platforms are used for various purposes (Lampropoulos et al., 2021), ranging from communicating related to coursework, sharing learning resources, to building interactions between peers and lecturers.

The benefits offered by social media in an educational context cannot be underestimated. They enable quick access to information, collaboration between students, and facilitate discussion and exchange of ideas. However, along with these benefits, the use of social media also brings a number of significant challenges (Ahmad & Nurhidaya, 2020), especially regarding digital ethics.

Serious issues such as cyberbullying, the spread of false information or hoaxes, and privacy violations are among the many problems that can arise in the context of social media use in education (Dennen et al., 2020). For example, students can become victims of bullying or harassment in the form of cyberbullying, which can have a serious impact on their mental well-being.

In addition, social media also has great potential to influence students' ethical behaviour, both online and offline. According to research conducted by (Fauziyyah, 2019), the use of social media in learning activities has positive and negative impacts on students' behaviour and achievement. The positive impact can add insight, while the negative impact is when in learning activities students secretly open social media other than for learning activities, reinforced by (Adegboyega, 2020) also shows that the use of social media by students has a negative influence on their social behaviour.

From the above observations on the positive and negative impacts of social media use, it can be concluded that it is important to pay attention to social interactions, content management, and their adherence to digital ethics (Utomo & Yuliana, 2023). It is important for educators to focus on learners' interactions on social media including communication skills, respecting opinions, and fostering tolerance (Efendi & Ningsih, 2022). As such, their awareness and adherence to digital ethical rules and norms becomes a key foundation in building a safe, ethical and responsible online environment.

This research was conducted to deeply analyse how Indonesian university students use social media and its impact on their ethics. By understanding more about the usage patterns, behaviours, and impacts of social media on students' ethics, it is hoped that the results of this study can provide useful insights for students themselves, lecturers, and educational policy makers.

The results of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for the development of guidelines or policies that promote responsible and ethical use of social media in educational settings. Meanwhile, it is also hoped that students can be more aware of the impact of their activities on social media and be able to develop more responsible behaviour in online and real-world spaces.

2. Method

In this research, the methods used are qualitative and quantitative analyses. The qualitative approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding of social media usage patterns and its impact on student ethics. This includes case studies, in-depth interviews with students and lecturers, and direct observation of online interactions. This research was conducted by taking a sample of 50 university students in Makassar City. The method used was qualitative and quantitative analysis to understand the pattern of social media use and its impact on student ethics. The qualitative approach involved in-depth interviews and case studies, while the quantitative approach used an online survey to collect measurable data. The combination of these two approaches is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media is used by university students in Indonesia and how it affects their ethics. Thus, qualitative and quantitative methods were used in an integrated manner to investigate this phenomenon from multiple perspectives.

3. Result and Discussions

The results of this study are expected to provide a more in-depth picture of how social media has influenced behaviour patterns and ethical norms among university students. Through this comprehensive explanation of the results, a clearer insight into how the use of social media affects the dynamics of the educational environment and the ethics of students in Indonesia will be obtained. The following is a description of the findings in this study.

Statistical Analysis

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Between Variables

Variable	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Perception of Ethics
Facebook	1.00	0.45	0.32	0.28
Instagram	0.45	1.00	0.60	0.42
Twitter	0.32	0.60	1.00	0.38
Perception of Ethics	0.28	0.42	0.38	1.00

The Pearson correlation table shows the relationship between the social media usage variables (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and the ethical perception variable among respondents: 1) The correlation value between the use of Instagram and Twitter shows a fairly strong correlation (0.60), indicating a significant relationship between the two; 2) The correlation value between Facebook and other variables tends to be lower, indicating a weaker correlation compared to Instagram and Twitter.

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The results showed a significant correlation between patterns of social media platform usage and perceptions of ethics among university students. Correlation analysis shows that more active use of Instagram and Twitter platforms is positively correlated with more positive perceptions of ethics in the academic environment. This means that students who are more active on Instagram and Twitter tend to have a more favourable perception of ethics in an educational context. However, an interesting result of this study is the lower correlation between Facebook use and positive perceptions of ethics. This indicates that Facebook use shows a different pattern or weaker relationship with perceived ethics in an academic setting compared to other platforms. These results suggest that the use of social media platforms has a different influence on students' ethical perceptions in higher education (Ahmda et al., 2020).

Qualitative Result

The results of in-depth interviews with several students showed that:

a. Interaction and Collaboration

The majority of students use social media as a tool to collaborate on group assignments, share learning materials, and discuss academic topics. They stated that platforms such as WhatsApp Group help them organise meetings and share ideas efficiently.

b. Content and Responses

Most students recognised the importance of disseminating accurate information, but some admitted that sometimes they also fall into the trap of disseminating unverified content due to time pressure or a desire for attention.

c. Influence on Ethics

Some students felt that social media helped them improve their communication skills and understanding of others' perspectives. However, there are also those who recognise that sometimes the social media environment creates pressure to compete or pursue popularity, which affects their attitudes and ethics in online interactions.

d. Negative Experiences

Some students also shared negative experiences of cyberbullying or unethical use of social media by some members of the academic community, which affected their trust and comfort in participating online.

The implications of the research results that show a correlation between the use of social media and the ethical perceptions of students in a college environment can have a significant impact on the educational environment, such as:

a. Designing Digital Education Policies

These results can serve as a basis for educational institutions to design policies that promote responsible and ethical use of social media among students. Educational institutions can formulate guidelines or curricula that encourage the use of social media for productive educational purposes.

b. Training and socialisation

Educational institutions can organise training or workshops that assist students and lecturers in understanding the ethical implications of social media use. This could involve discussing ethical behaviour on social media and how to use these platforms productively in an educational context.

c. Development of Digital Awareness and Skills

Through further understanding of the relationship between social media use and ethics, educational institutions can promote students' awareness of the impact of their online behaviour on the real world. Responsible digital skills development could also be a focus, including managing the content consumed and how to interact on social media platforms.

d. Integration of Social Media in Learning

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The research results can encourage the integration of social media as an effective educational tool. Educational institutions can utilise social-media platforms to enhance interaction, collaboration and more interactive learning among students, as well as develop a better understanding of digital ethics.

e. Further Research

These results can also serve as a basis for further research that deepens the understanding of the relationship between social media use and ethical aspects, students' mental well-being, and its impact on the educational environment.

The use of social media among university students has shown a significant impact on their ethical behaviour (Amiruddin et al., 2023; Faisal & Asri, 2022; Said & Asri, 2019). This study found that social media, as a dominant communication tool in the digital age, plays an important role in shaping social and ethical norms among university students. While social media provides an effective platform for the exchange of ideas and information, it also poses unique ethical challenges (Yusriadi, 2018, 2019; Yusriadi & Farida, 2019). This is particularly evident in cases of false information dissemination, privacy violations, and siberbullying behaviour.

Students, as active users of social media, often engage in online interactions that can influence their ethical views and actions. These interactions can have positive impacts, such as increasing social and political awareness, but can also bring negative impacts such as decreased empathy and increased aggressive behaviour (Faridav et al., 2021). Engagement in online discussions often brings up ethical dilemmas, forcing students to navigate between freedom of expression and social responsibility.

4. Conclusion

Universities play a key role in addressing this challenge. They should provide education and guidance to students on the ethical and responsible use of social media. This includes developing clear policies on acceptable online behaviour and providing training on digital literacy. In addition, there is a need to promote open discussions about ethics in social media use, so that students can develop a deeper understanding of the consequences of their actions in the digital world. Overall, the utilisation of social media by students in higher education carries profound implications for ethics. While social media facilitates the exchange of information and ideas, it also demands a more mature understanding of the ethical responsibilities of interacting online. Therefore, universities have a responsibility to equip students with the necessary skills to navigate these ethical complexities, ensuring that they become not only competent social media users, but also ethical and responsible digital citizens.

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