

The Role of Social Media in the Growth of Social Cohesion in the Post-Pandemic Era

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Abstract

The global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has caused turmoil in all sector of life. Some of these turmoil related to health, socio-economic, psychosocial, demographic and political aspects. This brought almost all people in various countries to a global emergency. The pandemic has made all people in the world experience disparities, substantive changes and inequalities which lead to uncertainty about welfare and vulnerability to poverty which has the potential to undermine social cohesion. Social cohesion was the connectedness between people, groups of people or communities in feeling connected to one another. The purpose of this study was to determine the role of social media in the growth of social cohesion, the positive and negative impacts of social media on the growth of social cohesion and efforts to minimize the negative impacts of social media on the growth of social cohesion. The approach in this study used a type of literature study or literature research. Literature study could be reached by collecting references consisting of several previous studies which were then compiled to draw conclusions. The results of this research showed that social media has revolutionized the way people communicated, connected, and shared information. For generation Z and millennials, social media platforms have become an inseparable part of their daily life. Social media offers tremendous potential for driving social cohesion among diverse communities, as it provided opportunities to communicate, engage with one another, and collaborate across geographic and cultural boundaries. This research were examine the role of social media in fostering social cohesion in the post-pandemic era. On the other hand, the increased use of social media has in fact resulted in the spread of disinformation which has negative implications for achieving social cohesion..

Keywords: social media; social cohesion; post-pandemi.

Introduction

The global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has had an effect on the health, economic, social, and in some cases political sectors, causing turmoil at all levels of society. It affects almost everyone in various countries in a global emergency there by disrupting almost all aspects of social life in every society. This situation carried at least five categories of impacts, namely social impacts such as the emergence of conflict and loss of social capital (Lindell & Prater, 2003), psychosocial impacts, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (Lindell & Prater, 2003), demographic impacts, such as changes in population distribution (Gleser et al. al., 2013; Steinglass & Gerrity, 1990), socio-economic

impacts, such as job losses and business closures (Kaniasty & Norris, 1993; Smith & McCarty, 1996), and political impacts (Okuyama & Chang, 2013). The economic impact of measures taken by the governments of each country to mitigate transmission such as quarantine, physical isolation, and restrictions on social activities initially resulted in mass unemployment (ECLAC, 2020a, 2020b, and 2020c).

From a social cohesion perspective, the pandemic has made everyone vulnerable to contagion and disease, albeit at different levels of risk. On the other hand, the sectors most vulnerable to being affected by this crisis are informal workers, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrant workers and

micro, small and medium enterprises (ECLAC/PAHO, 2020).

Aspects that were often mentioned in describing social cohesion were the strength of social relations, shared values and community, feelings, shared identities and a sense of belonging to the same community, trust among community members and levels of inequality and difference (Woolley 1998, Jenson 1998b). The Government of Canada's Policy Research Initiative defines social cohesion as an ongoing process of developing community, shared values, shared challenges, and equal opportunities based on a sense of trust, hope, and reciprocity among all Canadians. " (PRI 1999, p. 22)

The magnitude of the impact of the social and economic crisis in the post-pandemic era has had a serious impact on development to the point where it can jeopardize the achievements that have been achieved by each country (ECLAC, 2020a). The pandemic has accelerated and enlarged the scope of change arising from the adoption of new technologies in the world of work. This situation requires collaboration between all parties involved through the formation and regulation of new organizations in the digital world and the intensity of virtual interaction over face-to-face interactions. Such conditions require a rethinking of social cohesion such as universal guarantees for the welfare of the population.

Social media has revolutionized the way people communicate, connect, and share information. For Generation Z and Millennials, social media platforms have become an inseparable part of their daily lives. The platform offers tremendous potential to foster social cohesion among diverse communities, as it provides opportunities for communication, engagement and collaboration across geographic and cultural boundaries. This article examined the role of social media in the growth of social cohesion in the post-pandemic era, the positive and negative impacts of social media on the growth of social cohesion in the post-pandemic era and efforts that can be made to minimize the negative impacts of social media in the growth of social cohesion in the post-epidemic era.

Method

The approach in this study used a type of literature study or literature research. Literature study could be reached by collecting references consisting of several previous studies which are then compiled to draw conclusions (Mardalis, 1999). The results of a compilation of several previous studies were used to conclude: (1) What is the role of social media in the growth of social cohesion in the post-pandemic era. (2) What are the positive and negative impacts of social media on the growth of social cohesion in the post-pandemic era. (3) What efforts can be made to minimize the negative impact of social media on the growth of social cohesion in the post-pandemic era.

The procedure in this study was carried out in the following steps (Kulthau, 2002): 1. Choose a theme, 2. Information exploration, 3. Determine research direction, 4. Collect data sources, 5. Present data and 6. Prepare reports.

The data analysis technique used in this study used the content analysis method which can be used to obtain valid inferences and can be re-examined according to the context (Krippendoff, 1993). In the analysis, selection, comparison, merging, and sorting would be carried out so that the relevant ones are found (Sabarguna, 2005). Checking between libraries and observing the supervisor's comments was carried out in order to maintain the immutability of the process of evaluating, preventing and eliminating information which was a human misunderstanding that may arise due to a lack of literature writers (Sutanto, 2005).

Result and Discussion

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Instagram and WhatsApp were used by the majority of the population in many countries (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Stieglitz et al., 2018). Social media allowed users to create and share content and participate in social networks (van Dijck & Poell, 2013). The mass media has now entered the digital era and plays an active role in social media. Within seconds, any content could be circulated among thousands of people (Mirbabaie et al., 2014; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Due to the abundance of information and the variety of data sources, it

was increasingly difficult for citizens to find out which social media content can be trusted (Alkawaz et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2020; Ross et al., 2018).

A. The Positive Impact of Social Media on the Growth of Social Cohesion

According to a study conducted by (Pew Research Center, 2020) states that 90% of adults aged 18-29 years in the United States used at least one social media platform and make it a powerful tool to connect with the younger generation (Perrin & Anderson, 2020). In addition, research conducted by the European Commission in 2018 revealed that the use of social media could have a positive impact on social cohesion by encouraging users to interact with people from different backgrounds, facilitating exchange between cultures, and reducing feelings of loneliness (European Commission, 2018).

A study by the University of Pennsylvania in 2019 explained the potential of social media to bridge political differences. Researchers have found that when social media users were exposed to opposing political views, they become more empathetic and understanding towards those with different opinions (Bail et al., 2019).

This suggested that social media could play an important role in promoting social cohesion by promoting dialogue and understanding among different groups.

B. The Negative Impact of Social Media on the Growth of Social Cohesion

Apart from having a positive impact on the growth of social cohesion in the post-pandemic era, social media also has the potential to have a negative impact. Following were some of the negative impacts of social media on the growth of social cohesion in the post-pandemic era:

1. Social Media has the Potential for Political Division

Social media was in some ways a reflection of public opinion on policy, which could be used as an ideal reference for political officials to measure public opinion and position (Zeng et al. 2010). Therefore, to attract the attention of potential voters, many politicians used social media to build

and create direct communication with the public or their voters. Social media could also be used to spread political opinions by political institutions (Stieglitz, S. & Dang Xuan, 2013).

In a study of 12 political and non-political issues related to social contexts, it was stated that the communication of political issues using social media showed a significant trend. The use of social media as a means of politics greatly influences people's political participation (Levendusky, 2013).

The existence of competition between politicians and political institutions which was shown through the use of social media could sharpen people's alignments, which has the potential to lead to polarization of people's perceptions and emotional conditions. The potential for polarization and division of society due to political practices through social media was real. (Barbera, 2015).

The use of social media as a means of politics allowed politicians or political institutions to communicate directly with the public and citizens. This was also directly proportional to the potential of social media to invite the public to participate directly in political discussions.

However, on the other hand, social media often limited the diversity of communication by grouping people only with those who have the same views. While social media is in fact less able to function to facilitate people who have different political views. This of course could result in the emergence of divisions among the community.

2. Social Media has the Potential for Class and Digital Division

The high popularity of social media results in more and more people being able to access it. The ability to master technology could be said to be the key to determining the economic development of a person or society. Some experts stated that people must learn to use new technologies (internet or social media) in order to have equal

opportunities to succeed (Wilson et al., 2003).

The condition of people in various regions of the world today has a variety of abilities to use new technologies (internet or social media). This makes experts use the term digital divide to describe the gap between those who benefit from new technologies (internet or social media) and those who do not. In a study stated that the higher a person's social status, the faster they acquire knowledge (Tichenor et al., 1970). It was the existing social stratification that causes the emergence of the digital divide.

The increasing role of social media in people's social life requires users to have certain skills (internet or social media), while learning skills to use the internet or social media was not evenly distributed. As a result, differences in social stratification in society were directly proportional to differences in the level of ability to use the internet or social media. This resulted in a sharper division of social class in society.

3. Social Media has the Potential of Ethnic Division

Unlike traditional media, social media requires users to provide basic information about their identity. This could be an influential factor in the content recommended by the system in social media. In practice, social media would present information based on the ethnic group or race of its users to increase the frequency of use. Racial topics were often encountered in social media, for example white people will receive relatively less information on controversial issues regarding ethnicity.

Social media often only pursues interesting news, topics that benefit certain racial groups where this has the potential to lead to conflicts and divisions based on racial and ethnic differences. Thus, social media not only has the opportunity to reduce racial and ethnic divisions in society but can also increase them.

C. Efforts to Minimize the Negative Impact of Social Media on the Growth of Social Cohesion

The increased use of social media has in fact resulted in the spread of disinformation which has negative implications for achieving social cohesion. Disinformation in this case comes in various forms but the most common was in the form of fake news (hoaxes) and propaganda which has the potential to cause division and ostracism in society. The following were three things that policy makers should pay attention to when making regulations or rules regarding social media:

1. Social Norms in Social Media

A person's behavior was greatly influenced by the norms and rules that apply (Matias, 2019; Munger, 2016). Likewise with social media platforms, which must also set clear community standards, and prioritize social norms. Phenomena of violating social norms in social media such as the use of strong language, harassment, and disinformation were very difficult to identify. This makes law enforcement complicated.

An automated system was needed that can be used by social media platforms to encourage people to pause and reconsider potentially harmful or offensive replies or posts before they post them. An example was when Twitter released "Birdwatch" in early 2021, a program that allowed users to flag, identify potentially misleading information and annotate the context of the information (Allen et al., 2022, Martel et al., 2022).

Apart from that, as a user of social media, it was appropriate if you do not cultivate negative behavior in social media, such as spreading fake news (hoaxes), comments or posts that have divisive content, pornography, hate speech but prioritize social norms so as to create a good social media ecosystem.

2. Management of Algorithmic Curation and Recommendations on Social Media

The system of how algorithmic curation and recommendations work in

social media makes users choose information according to previous choices that are dominant and prominent and make recommendations about who users should follow. In response to this, policy makers should make data access and transparency a regulatory priority.

Apart from that, as users of social media, the public was expected to be wiser and more selective in choosing reading sources, references or things they want to know so they don't get caught up in fake news or information (hoaxes) and other negative things.

3. Management of Feedback Mechanisms on Social Media

The feedback mechanism feature on social media was a feature that allows users to provide feedback or press certain buttons, for example like buttons, re-share buttons and other capabilities for messages submitted by other users. An important regulatory priority in this regard was to ensure access to data and the ability to collaborate in order to design effective and constructive feedback mechanisms.

Apart from that, social media users are expected to be able to provide objective and unemotional feedback, provide balanced feedback and provide suggestions for improvement so as to create a good ecosystem in social media.

Conclusion

Social cohesion was a vital context in the success of society. The success of one's community depends on how connected its members are and how willing they are to participate in all the projects and activities in their area.

Social media has revolutionized the way people communicate, connect, and share information. For Generation Z and Millennials, social media platforms have become an inseparable part of their daily life. The platform offers tremendous potential to foster social cohesion among diverse communities, as it provides opportunities for communication, engagement and collaboration across geographic and cultural boundaries.

The increased use of social media has in fact resulted in the spread of disinformation which has negative implications for achieving

social cohesion. Disinformation in this case comes in various forms but the most common is in the form of fake news (hoaxes) and propaganda which has the potential to cause division and ostracism in society. This needs to get serious attention by policy makers when making regulations or rules regarding social media.

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