The Influence of Social Media on Changes in Social Values among Millennials

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Abstract

The development of digital technology, especially social media, has significantly changed the way humans communicate and interact. The shift from face-to-face communication to virtual interaction creates a new dynamic in interpersonal relationships that prioritizes speed and efficiency. This is especially felt among the millennial generation who grow up with technological advancements. Social media has become the main platform in forming their identity, strengthening social relationships, and expressing themselves. Digital interactions through these platforms make it easier for them to engage in social movements and global issues, but they also raise concerns about the long-term impact on social skills and mental health. While social media allows for wider connectivity and participation, this engagement is often accompanied by challenges such as loss of face-to-face communication skills, identity crises, and increased anxiety and isolation. Therefore, further research is needed to understand more deeply how social media affects the interpersonal relationships and emotional well-being of this generation, as well as to formulate effective strategies in harnessing the positive potential of digital technologies, while minimizing the negative impacts that arise.

1.   Introduction

The development of digital technology has significantly changed the way humans communicate, creating an environment where virtual interaction increasingly dominates. One of the most notable changes is the shift from traditional face-to-face communication to digital interaction through platforms such as social media and instant messaging apps. This shift is not only limited to the way people exchange information, but also creates a new dynamic in interpersonal relationships that prioritizes speed and efficiency in communicating (Tugiah & Jamilus, 2022). This change is very noticeable in daily life, especially among the millennial generation who grew up in the midst of the technological revolution. The generation born between 1981-1996 is considered the most technologically connected generation, as they experience adolescence and adulthood along with the advent of the internet and increasingly sophisticated mobile devices (Rais et.al., 2018). The ability to access information and communicate in real-time through such devices makes them very familiar with the digital world. Social media, as one of the main components of this digital interaction, has become an inseparable part of their daily lives, forming a different pattern of social interaction than previous generations. With various digital platforms dominating the way they interact, millennials prefer fast and efficient virtual interactions compared to face-to-face interactions which are considered more time-consuming and effort-consuming (Zis et.al., 2021).

This shift towards digital interaction also has a significant impact on social skills and interpersonal relationships, where the way people relate to each other is undergoing a fundamental change. Purba et.al (2020) said that before the digital era, social skills depended a lot on a person's ability to communicate directly,

understand body language, and respond to non-verbal cues. Now, with more interactions being done through text or images on social media, these skills are beginning to be replaced by skills in managing digital profiles and effective text messaging (Dwivedi & Lewis, 2021). Interpersonal relationships, which once relied more on physical presence and face-to-face dialogue, are now increasingly being built and nurtured through digital platforms that allow distance and time to be no longer the main barriers. Although many studies have examined these changes from various perspectives, most have only underlined the changes on the surface without going deeper into their long-term impacts. Meanwhile, there are still many unanswered questions about how this shift affects the quality of interpersonal relationships in the long term, especially in the context of sincerity, empathy, and emotional connection. This shift also raises concerns about the loss of social skills that are crucial in forming and maintaining meaningful relationships outside of the digital space (Nguyen et.al., 2022). Therefore, more research is urgently needed to understand the deeper impact of this transition on interpersonal relationships, including how millennials are adapting to different forms of interaction from previous generations.

Social media has become the primary means for millennials to express themselves, where they can share their thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences with a wider social circle than is possible in the real world (Utomo & Yuliana, 2023). In addition, social media also plays an important role in facilitating the involvement of this generation in various social movements that are growing around the world, often known as digital activism. Digital activism allows millennials to be more involved in social, political, and environmental issues that they consider important, without having to be physically involved (Choeriyah & Assyahri, 2024). Through platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, they can voice their opinions, disseminate information, and organize movements aimed at influencing social change (Fadilla et.al., 2024). This phenomenon shows how the millennial generation not only consumes information, but is also active in shaping the social narrative that occurs around it (Boer et.al., 2020). However, while the effects seem obvious, the long-term impact of these digital engagements on social participation in general is still not fully understood. More in-depth research is needed to measure the effectiveness of digital activism, especially in terms of how it can affect public awareness and social participation in a sustainable manner among millennials. In addition, the influence of digital activism on public policy and social change in the long term is also an area that needs further exploration.

Additionally, social media plays a major role in raising awareness of social, cultural, and political issues among millennials, who often show a great interest in topics such as diversity and inclusivity. Through digital platforms, they can easily connect to various movements that champion the values of tolerance and solidarity, both at the local and global levels. In his research, Arfan et.al (2023) said that the millennial generation uses social media as a tool to disseminate information about the importance of diversity and how inclusivity can strengthen an increasingly pluralistic society. In many cases, social media becomes a space where they can share experiences about how they face challenges related to these issues, which then shapes a broader discussion. However, while the role of social media in reinforcing diversity values appears significant, there are still few studies that comprehensively examine the long-term effectiveness of social media use in reinforcing these values. Febriansyah & Muksin (2020) explained that there are concerns that excessive use of social media to promote inclusivity can lead to polarity, where discussions that are supposed to build bridges actually reinforce divisions. Therefore, it is important to further understand how social media is actually influencing this generation's view of diversity and inclusivity issues, as well as whether these values can be maintained in the long term through digital platforms.

On the other hand, social media also provides a space for millennials to express themselves online, where they often use these platforms to build a self-identity that better reflects their personal interests and views (Nurdin & Labib, 2021). These online identities are often carefully curated, where they choose the content they want to share with the world and filter out aspects of themselves that may not fit the image they want to create. In this context, social media gives them the opportunity to express themselves more freely than in the real world, where social and cultural norms are often stricter. However, relying on social media to get social validation from others can also cause serious psychological problems, such as identity crises and self-dissatisfaction (Mahmud, 2024). In an effort to meet social expectations that are often unrealistic, many people feel pressured to display their perfect self-image on social media, which can ultimately upset their emotional balance (Altuwairiqi et.al., 2019). Gaps in understanding how social media influences identity formation across different social and cultural backgrounds also remain, given the different social dynamics across different groups of society.

Reliance on social media also has a significant negative impact on mental health, especially among millennials who are most affected by this trend. One of the phenomena that has been highlighted a lot is Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), where individuals feel anxious or anxious because they are worried about missing out on information, events, or experiences that are popular among their friends or environment (Alutaybi, 2020). Additionally, social media addiction has been linked to increased anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation among this generation, as they feel they need to be constantly connected to stay relevant and accepted in their environment. Ardi & Putri (2020) explained that excessive use of social media often leads to feelings of isolation, where even though they are technically connected to many people, they feel they lack deep or meaningful connections. This negative impact has been widely discussed in various studies, but the direct link between social media use and long-term mental well-being still needs more research. This phenomenon shows that the use of

social media not only has an impact on social interaction, but also on the emotional and psychological health of the millennial generation as a whole.

Therefore, it is very important to understand how social media affects communication patterns, social relationships, and the mental well-being of millennials, in order to find a wiser solution in utilizing it. Without a deep understanding, it is difficult to formulate effective strategies to minimize negative impacts and maximize the positive potential of these digital technologies. More thorough research is needed to explore how digital platforms can be optimally utilized, both to strengthen social skills and to maintain mental health. By better understanding the dynamics that occur, it will be easier for policymakers, educators, and mental health practitioners to develop a more holistic approach. A wiser solution to leveraging social media is not just about reducing negative impacts, but also about how this technology can be used to promote social and emotional well-being.

2. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to deeply understand the influence of social media on changes in social values among the millennial generation. Creswell and Poth (2018) in the book "Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches", Creswell and Poth stated that phenomenology aims to understand the meaning that individuals give to their experiences The research subjects consist of millennials who actively use social media, namely individuals born between 1981-1996. They were selected based on criteria such as activeness on social media, diversity of educational backgrounds, jobs, and residences, in order to obtain a variety of perspectives. This study uses a purposive sampling technique, with a total of 25 subjects, to ensure the relevance of the data to the research objectives.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews are used to explore the subject's views on the influence of social media on their social values. Participatory observation is carried out with the researcher following the subject's activities on social media, while documentation is in the form of collecting content shared by the subject on the platform. The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis, with a process that included interview transcription, coding, theme categorization, and interpretation of findings.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study uses data triangulation by comparing results from various sources, conducting member checks by asking for feedback from subjects regarding the results of the initial research, and peer debriefing with other researchers. The ethical aspect is also considered by obtaining informed consent from the subject and maintaining the confidentiality of their identity. With this method, the research is expected to provide an in-depth picture of the impact of social media on social values among the millennial generation.

3. Results

Changes in Communication and Social Relations

The zoning system policy is a breakthrough issued by the government. This policy aims to accelerate the distribution of educational quality in educational units in Indonesia (Sidik, 2024). The system policy for accepting new students in Sidoarjo Regency is implemented online. Everything from the school department needs to be accepted. That means that the problem of obstacles no longer exists. It is just that schools are asked for verification or direct observation; usually, problems are found in the affirmation route. When observing in the field, some are capable but register on the affirmation route. For the zoning system, no problems were found because everything runs according to the system.

The shift from face-to-face communication to digital interaction has changed the way people interact in their daily lives. In the past, people relied on direct interaction to build social relationships, where facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language were important parts of communication. However, advances in digital technology allow communication to occur quickly through social media, instant messaging applications, and email, so that traditional communication patterns have changed (Alamsyah et.al., 2024). Communication that previously required a physical presence can now be done in seconds from anywhere and anytime. While they provide convenience and speed, digital interactions are often shorter and focus on practical goals without emotional depth. When communication occurs more in digital form, the relationships established tend to become more superficial. People may feel connected through "likes" and "shares" on social media, but the relationships they create often don't have the same emotional depth as face-to-face interactions. As a result, people's expectations of social relationships change, and the emotional aspect of relationships becomes increasingly difficult to build and maintain.

This shift has a major impact on social skills, especially for the younger generation growing up in the digital era. Interaction through text or images minimizes the opportunity to hone skills in understanding non-verbal cues

such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language. This skill is usually honed through face-to-face interaction, but now it is becoming less common. Fast-paced and efficient digital communication often ignores these elements, resulting in difficulties in understanding interpersonal dynamics. Young people who are used to communicating through text may have difficulty understanding the feelings of others, especially when no non-verbal cues are being conveyed. Face-to-face interaction experience is also important for developing active listening skills, which are difficult to obtain through digital communication that tends to be short. Javed et.a, (2020) said that when listening and responding skills directly are not honed, people tend to focus more on themselves and are less sensitive to the feelings of others. In addition, generations who are used to interacting digitally may feel uncomfortable in face-to-face conversations that require spontaneous responses, which ultimately impacts their ability to interact in real life.

Interpersonal relationships have also undergone significant changes due to the shift to digital communication. The existence of social media platforms and instant messaging apps allows people to stay connected easily, but the bonds forged through technology are often not deep. The culture of "likes" and "shares" on social media can give the illusion of closeness, even though the relationships created tend to be superficial and are more concerned with the number of interactions than the quality. Many people feel like they have a lot of friends on social media, but they still feel lonely because of relationships that have little emotional support. The phenomenon of "alone together" describes how people can feel lonely even though they have many friends online, because real emotional closeness is difficult to build in digital communication. On the other hand, digital communication also allows a person to create an online identity that may be different from their original identity, which can obscure the emotional bond in the relationship (Panjaitan et.al., 2020). People often only show the positive side on social media, which can create unrealistic expectations in the relationship. As a result, relationships dominated by digital communication tend to lose the intimacy aspect commonly found in face-to-face interactions, so the quality of interpersonal relationships decreases.

The lack of face-to-face interaction in digital communication also contributes to a decline in empathy and emotional skills (Venter, 2019). In face-to-face conversations, a person can feel the feelings of others through body language and facial expressions, which is part of the development of empathy. However, in digital communication, text or voice messages are not fully capable of conveying complex emotional nuances. This limitation makes it harder for people to feel empathy, because emotional cues are often not conveyed in text messages. In addition, fast and efficient digital messages can be interpreted in a variety of ways, which sometimes leads to misunderstandings due to the lack of emotional context. The inability to fully express emotions in digital interactions also has an impact on emotional health, where relationships that lack empathy tend to be more prone to conflict. When people are used to interacting without deep emotional involvement, they may be more likely to give less caring or even rude responses. Ultimately, the lack of empathy in digital communication reduces the quality of social relationships, as the emotional bonds that normally develop in direct interactions become increasingly eroded.

While digital communication allows people to stay connected, over-reliance on digital media actually increases loneliness and social isolation for some. Feelings of loneliness can arise because human needs for physical presence and emotional support are not always met through online interactions. Many people feel lonely despite having hundreds of friends on social media, as the relationship often doesn't provide the emotional closeness they need. In addition, the interactions that take place on social media are usually temporary and superficial, so they cannot replace the need for deeper relationships. Research shows that excessive social media use can be associated with increased levels of depression and loneliness, especially among adolescents (Arias-de la Torre et.al., 2020). In addition, the busyness of interacting in cyberspace reduces a person's attention to the immediate relationships around them, such as with family or close friends. When a person is more interested in social media than talking directly to the people around them, the quality of relationships in the family and social circle decreases. The impact of social isolation due to dependence on digital technology ultimately affects a person's ability to feel a real sense of togetherness, making many people feel increasingly isolated in an increasingly connected world.

In the world of work, the shift to digital communication is also changing the way people interact in professional contexts. Many companies now rely on email, messaging apps, and video conferencing for efficiency reasons, but this reduces the personal aspect of professional relationships. Relationships that are usually built through direct interaction tend to become more superficial when communication is done more digitally. Efficient digital communication often takes away the spontaneity and intimacy found in physical meetings, making it more difficult to build bonds between team members. In addition, employees who interact more online may feel less engaged with the company culture due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. While remote work is possible, digital communication doesn't always support the engagement and intimacy required in teamwork. In terms of

productivity, digital communication tends to focus on goals without paying attention to the emotional aspect, so collaboration is more transactional (Gemilang & Yuliana, 2023). This can affect employee enthusiasm and job satisfaction in the long run, which ultimately affects loyalty to the company. This adaptation in working relationships that rely more on digital communication risks lowering the quality of interaction in the professional environment, which was previously crucial in building close and supportive working relationships.

Values of Diversity and Tolerance

Social media opens up wider and faster access to information from around the world, allowing millennials to keep abreast of social, cultural, and political issues. In a matter of seconds, news about racial discrimination, human rights, and cultural diversity can spread widely to various circles. Social media makes it easier to directly access major news sources or organizations involved, so that millennials can build a deep understanding without relying entirely on conventional media (Situmorang, 2023). The interactive nature of social media encourages them to discuss and participate in expressing opinions, forming a rich space for opinion collaboration. Viral news, such as #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo campaigns, bring previously overlooked issues into everyday conversations, reinforcing solidarity and collective support for the values of diversity and tolerance. Millennials can spread their views more widely through sharing features on social media, which increases public exposure to their perspectives. With this quick access, their awareness of social justice increases, becoming a trigger in voicing resistance to discrimination. This condition encourages a positive change in their understanding of the importance of respecting and accepting differences.

In this case, social media not only functions as a means of information, but also as a space for the formation of positive values among the younger generation. When certain issues are discussed openly, millennials can see how different views respond to an issue, so they are better prepared to adopt an inclusive view. Access to this variety of news makes the millennial generation more responsive to issues of social justice and equality. On a broader scale, it builds awareness that encourages them to get involved in advocating for minority rights, both in the social environment and in cyberspace. The ability to independently assess information and discuss with various groups strengthens their attitude towards diversity, while enriching their insight into the global community. This process triggers internal and external reflection that reinforces the values of diversity, tolerance, and respect for human rights. This interactive experience makes social media an effective tool to influence the attitudes and life views of the millennial generation. In other words, social media is a dynamic arena for social learning and the cultivation of inclusive tolerance values.

Social media allows millennials to get to know diverse cultures and perspectives, opening up space to learn about the differences that exist between them (Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Through accounts or pages from various countries, they can get to know customs, languages, and different perspectives in understanding the world. For example, platforms like Instagram or YouTube are often used to share content about the traditions and customs of different parts of the world, so that users from other cultures can see and understand it firsthand. Millennials, who are generally open to new information, can easily recognize and accept these differences through daily interactions in cyberspace. This kind of content also contributes to enriching their insights, helping them see differences as natural and valuable. This makes it easier for them to overcome their fear or stereotype of something unfamiliar. This process reinforces their awareness of the importance of open-mindedness and respect for differences, which is the foundation of tolerance.

By frequently interacting with cross-cultural content, millennials tend to develop a more inclusive attitude. They more easily understand that everyone has unique and valuable values, which do not need to be adjusted to certain standards (Fiske, 2018). This situation encourages them to position themselves as individuals who are ready to accept and appreciate other cultures and identities without prejudice. When they see how people from other cultures live their lives, they can feel how diversity becomes a wealth in itself. Social media is a cultural bridge that encourages them to respect the value of diversity and fight discrimination. Through these interactions, social media builds an atmosphere where differences are perceived as something that enriches, not as a separator. Exposure to these different perspectives forms a more open mindset, which instantly reinforces the value of tolerance in their lives. This also teaches the importance of caring for diversity in wider social life.

The millennial generation is known as a group that is active in advocating for various social, cultural, and political issues through social media. They are often involved in digital campaigns that support minority rights, gender equality, or resistance to discrimination, such as #StopAsianHate or #LoveIsLove movements. Social media makes it easy for them to come together virtually, form communities, and share visions in championing issues that are important to inclusivity. By leveraging features such as hashtags, live broadcasts, or short videos, millennials can create a wave of change that has a wide impact, both locally and globally. This campaign slowly instills the value of diversity and encourages them to think critically about social problems. This activism also

creates a more inclusive environment, where a wide range of views are respected and accepted. The use of social media to voice the value of inclusivity makes the platform an effective means of informal education for many individuals.

This digital activism not only introduces them to important issues, but also enriches their understanding of the broader social reality. Through their involvement in various campaigns, they learn to recognize and appreciate differences and realize the importance of fighting for individual rights that are often overlooked. Social media, with all its facilities, allows them to spread positive messages about social justice and combat stigma and stereotypes. The Millennial Generation is not only a passive supporter, but also takes an active role as an agent of social change that influences public opinion (Lumbantoruan et.al., 2020). This attitude shapes their perspective on social justice, fosters empathy, and strengthens their awareness of social responsibility in maintaining diversity. Digital activism gives millennials the opportunity to participate directly in issues that impact their daily lives. As a result, they have grown into a generation that is more responsive, caring, and willing to contribute to building a just and inclusive society.

Social media facilitates the formation of collective identities among millennials, especially through involvement in social issues rooted in the values of diversity and tolerance. When they participate in social campaigns such as #MentalHealthAwareness or #SayNoToRacism, they feel part of a larger group that shares the same goals and views. This creates a sense of solidarity that reinforces their commitment to the values of inclusivity and diversity. Social media allows millennials to connect with others who share similar views, so they can support each other in voicing relevant issues (Fitriyani et.al., 2024). This process not only builds social awareness, but also strengthens collective identity based on positive values. This collective identity strengthens their view of the importance of maintaining diversity in community life.

By prioritizing social awareness and the value of togetherness, they become more concerned about issues that threaten equality and human rights. This collective identity encourages them to actively spread the value of tolerance, both through uploads and discussions on social media. Social media serves as a place for millennials to practice empathy and understand the importance of respecting differences. By being part of a community that shares the same awareness, they feel supported in fighting for inclusive and tolerant values. These interactions also build their social awareness, making them better prepared to face social challenges and create change. Thus, social media becomes a dynamic space where inclusive collective identities continue to develop, enriching their perspective on life. This role makes social media an important tool to instill awareness and diversity in daily life.

Self-Identity and Self-Expression:

Social media plays a significant role in the formation of individual identities, especially among the millennial generation, who are very active in cyberspace. Through platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, they can display different sides of themselves more freely and creatively. Social media provides a space for millennials to try out various identities and find the self-shape that best suits their personality. Features such as photos, videos, or writing allow them to express their interests, lifestyle, and beliefs, so their self-image is formed from audience interactions and responses. It also encourages them to develop identities that may be different from their real-world selves, sometimes bolder or more creative. Each post, comment, or interaction shapes how others perceive themselves, and this gradually affects how they perceive and understand their own identity. In this way, social media allows the millennial generation to undergo a continuous process of self-exploration, adapting according to the experiences and interactions they gain in cyberspace.

Self-expression on social media is not only limited to interests and personality, but also becomes a forum for millennials to highlight their values, beliefs, and life goals. In an increasingly connected world, millennials are using social media as a means to show their complex and diverse identities. For example, a person can show their commitment to environmental issues by sharing related content, or showcase their involvement in a particular social issue through posts or comments. Not only does this make them feel heard and understood, but it also forms a collective identity with other users who share similar visions. This consistently displayed individual identity also affects their image in the eyes of the public as well as reinforces their sense of personal identity. More than that, this process facilitates a greater sense of self-fulfillment as they can actively participate in conversations that are meaningful to them, strengthen their self-confidence, and affirm their existence and value in the digital society. Thus, social media is not only a medium of sharing, but also an arena where self-identity can develop and connect with the world.

Mental Health:

The use of social media has a significant impact on the mental health of the millennial generation, both positively and negatively. On the one hand, social media provides a means to interact, share stories, and gain

emotional support. However, on the other hand, excessive exposure to social media content dominated by ideal lifestyles and beauty standards can increase psychological distress. Millennials often compare themselves to others who seem successful, happy, or have an attractive appearance, so they are prone to anxiety and dissatisfaction with themselves. This condition encourages feelings of inferiority and self-doubt, especially if they feel incapable of achieving these often unrealistic standards. This process of social comparison, although not always conscious, risks exacerbating anxiety disorders, especially since millennials are in a stressful phase of life to meet certain expectations. This phenomenon is further strengthened by the "like" and "comment" features which can be a source of validation for most users, but can also trigger anxiety if they do not get the expected response.

Feelings of isolation or social isolation are also a negative impact of social media use that needs to be considered. Although social media provides the illusion of connection, many users feel more alienated because the interactions that occur tend to be superficial and instantaneous. As people spend more time online and neglect face-to-face interactions, a gap arises between real social needs and limited online experiences. This feeling of isolation can develop into depression if left unaddressed, especially when millennials find it difficult to find real emotional support. This isolation effect is also exacerbated by social media algorithms that tend to display content relevant to personal interests, thus leaving users trapped in a "filter bubble." They tend to only interact with information or like-minded people, thus reducing the chances of experiencing diverse and healthy social interactions. Without realizing it, this condition makes them increasingly isolated from the real world, potentially worsening their mental health in the long run.

4. Conclusion

The change in communication from face-to-face to digital interactions has changed the way people interact, often resulting in more superficial and less emotional relationships. While it makes communication easier, digital interactions tend to reduce social skills, empathy, and the quality of interpersonal relationships, thereby increasing loneliness and isolation for some people. On the other hand, social media plays an important role in building awareness of diversity and tolerance. Millennials can quickly access information, participate in discussions, and engage in social campaigns that support justice. Social media is an arena for the formation of inclusive collective identities, encouraging the values of diversity and tolerance and strengthening commitment to human rights. Finally, social media also contributes to the formation of millennials' self-identity and self-expression, where they can explore and express themselves through various platforms. This process strengthens the relationship between individuals and communities, allowing them to be more open and accepting of differences.

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