



Social Ethics of Young People Amidst Massive Social Media Use

Aloysius Dirgahayu Doren

Program Magister Filsafat Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Teologi Widya Sasana, Malang, Indonesia

bayudoren@gmail.com

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Abstract:

Technological advancements, particularly the internet and social media, significantly impact human life, including young people who are primary users. They quickly master technology and have made it a part of their primary needs. We conducted research at the St. Yusup College Dormitory (Kosayu), Malang, involving middle and high school students, both male and female, to understand the impact of social media use. We employed a quantitative research method with a descriptive approach. The research findings show that young people at Kosayu Dormitory possess empathy, follow current trends, and are future-oriented. They use social media daily to gain various positive things but are also aware of its negative impacts. Despite this, they are prone to negative influences. In terms of ethics, they understand the importance of ethical behavior and avoid racist comments. In conclusion, technological advancements shape the identity and character of young people, thus requiring proper social ethics education in this digital age.

INTRODUCTION

Today's individuals are inseparable from the internet and social media (Melo et al., 2023). Most people, from children to the elderly, use them daily. The internet and social media have become primary needs due to the demand for information, entertainment, and access to various knowledge from around the world (Nasrullah, 2017:1). Most job types also require social media and the internet. Rapid technological advancements bring the world into our hands. It refers to the increasingly flat world where anyone can access anything from any source as "the world is flat." Richard Hunter (2002) calls it a "world without secrets" because new media (cybermedia) makes information easily searchable and accessible (Nasrullah, 2017:1).

The sophistication of the internet provides many conveniences for its users. The internet transcends the boundaries of life, space, and time (Pratama et al., 2021). Anyone, anywhere can access the internet. However, this sophistication also brings negative impacts, such as the spread of hoaxes, pornography, bullying on social media, image manipulation, and various other crimes. Therefore, there is a need for limitations, policies, rules, and proper ethics in using the internet and social media.

Facts show that children and teenagers, known as the "digital native generation," are primary gadget users (Simbolon et al., 2021). Gadget addiction is evident from the extensive time spent on these advanced communication tools, sometimes for hours or days, with some resorting to drugs like methamphetamine to stay awake and play online games (Raharso,

2018,123). The digital native generation is highly modern and can find and produce anything from the internet.

Social researchers often classify individuals born between 1980 and 2000 as millennials (Winastiti, 2022). This millennial generation comprises young people currently aged between 15 and 34. They have integrated information technology into their lives or lifestyles. They are online not only to communicate with others, seek information, and complete tasks but also often get caught up in negative activities. They forget the good aspects and express themselves freely in the online world.

Technological advancements impact all aspects of human life, including Christian religious life. The church exists in a highly advanced world with the presence of social media. With social media, one can interact/communicate with others. Social media includes various sophisticated application features, leading individuals to use more than one application. Some of the current popular applications include email, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Line, Path, and YouTube. Social media is now used not only for communication but also for entertainment and faith proclamation. The church, consciously or unconsciously, exists in a world closely tied to social media (Yuliano et al., 2022).

The church does not deny the world of social media and the digital world in general, as evidenced by various documents and encyclicals discussing these issues. Documents like *Inter Merifica* (IM), Pope Paul VI's encyclical on *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), and Pope John Paul II's encyclical on *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) are examples. Additionally, the Holy Father's pastoral letters on World Communications Day from Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, to Pope Francis also reflect the church's stance on social media developments.

The church recognizes that this development affects humanity, including the faithful. This media influence relates not only to media communication use but also to attitudes, mentality, behavior, and societal culture (Komisi Kateketik KWI, 2015:37). The church sees both opportunities and challenges in this digital era. The opportunity is that the church can use new methods of communication in the digital age, which is an opportunity to further proclaim the Gospel (Komisi Kateketik KWI, 2015:40). The presence of social media is a golden opportunity to seek, think about, and find new breakthroughs in faith teachings, including Catholic faith. However, the church also sees challenges to behavior and perspectives affecting religious life (Komisi Kateketik KWI, 2015:41).

Irregular media use brings negative impacts, especially on families (Minggu Komunikasi Sosial/MKS 3, 14, 25, 28, 38), children (MKS 41), and youth (MKS 4, 19) (Komisi Kateketik KWI, 2015:44). Many media messages undermine family life values, separate family members into their own worlds, and strain interpersonal relationships. Media also provides distorted views on life, family, religion, and morality. News about infidelity, extramarital sex, divorce, abortion, and other negative issues spread by the media harms and diminishes the meaning and sanctity of family (Komisi Kateketik KWI, 2015:45).

Among children and young people, communication media have a significant influence. They are the most affected by the flow of information and images produced by communication

media (MKS 19). Media enriches and supports the development of maturity in children and youth but also brings negative impacts. Various media have replaced traditional cultural media like personal contact at home, school, and parishes. Children and young people become consumers of the communication media industry focused on themselves, attracted to erotica and violence, or led to confused, anxious, and chaotic behavior (MKS 4). They become asocial individuals always in front of computers and communication tools, often unable to distinguish right from wrong, preferring what aligns with their own lives, though it may not necessarily be good or correct (Komisi Kateketik KWI, 2015:45). Therefore, young people need to understand proper ethics in using social media. Good ethics will help them avoid negative impacts, use media correctly, and develop and proclaim their faith.

METHOD

We used a descriptive quantitative research method (Riyanto, 2020:48). This method aims to obtain various data about human daily experiences, cultural events or local wisdom, religious struggles, interactions, and through surveys. We collected this data by exploring and interpreting it, which includes case studies, personal experiences, introspective reports, life stories, artifacts, various texts and cultural products, observations, or history (Firmanto, 2017:5). Data collection was conducted by distributing questionnaires using a Likert Scale.

We distributed the questionnaires via Google Forms on December 9, 2022. Dormitory residents were given the opportunity to fill out the Google Form from December 9 to 16, 2022. Before distributing the Google Form, we held two meetings with all the dormitory residents, on November 12, 2022, and December 7, 2022. In the first meeting, we explained the research objectives and built relationships with the dormitory residents. The second meeting was used to introduce the Google Form and explain how to fill it out to the dormitory residents. During the week, the researchers visited the children in the dormitory to assist those who had difficulties filling out the Google Form.

The number of respondents was 208, and the questionnaire consisted of 25 questions: 10 questions related to youth, 10 questions about social media, and 5 questions concerning social ethics. The goal was to find the percentage for each statement. This result was obtained by first calculating the total score for each statement and interpreting the scores.

This research focuses on the lives of young people who constantly use social media and the attitudes that the Church should cultivate and instill in young people regarding their social media use. We limited the scope of the research and discussion by defining the research setting. The research setting reflects the location of the research that is directly "attached" to the focus of the research (Firmanto, 2017,5). In this case, the research setting for this article is the students of St. Yusup Malang College Dormitory, which includes the Male Middle School Dormitory, Male High School Dormitory, and Female High School Dormitory.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Kosayu Dormitory consists of the Male Middle School Dormitory, Male High School Dormitory, and Female High School Dormitory. During the study, Kosayu Dormitory housed

208 students. They come from various ethnic groups and religions from different regions in Indonesia. In terms of gender, 142 students (68.3%) are male, and 66 students (31.7%) are female, indicating a higher involvement of male students in this study. This is understandable as Kosayu Dormitory has two dormitories for boys (Male Middle School and Male High School) and only one dormitory for girls (Female High School).

In terms of age, the respondent group is as follows: 12 years old – 10 students (10.5%), 13 years old – 19 students (19.9%), 14 years old – 15 students (15.7%), 15 years old – 60 students (60.29%), 16 years old – 51 students (51.24%), 17 years old – 39 students (39.19%), 18 years old – 12 students (12.6%), and 19 years old – 2 students (2.1%). This data shows that the majority of respondents are 15 years old, which includes students from grades VIII to X.

In the Male Middle School Dormitory group, there are three religions practiced: Catholic, Protestant, and Buddhist. The students are 29.16% Catholic, 68.75% Protestant, and 2.08% Buddhist. In the Male High School Dormitory group, students aged 14-19 practice Catholicism (60%), Protestantism (37.89%), and Buddhism (2.10%). In the Female High School Dormitory group, students aged 14-19 practice Catholicism (62.12%), Protestantism (34.84%), Buddhism (1.52%), and Islam (1.52%).

The residents at Kosayu Dormitory come from various regions in Indonesia, categorized into 8 islands: Java (40.38%), Bali (3.36%), Kalimantan (16.82%), Maluku (1.44%), Nusa Tenggara (9.13%), Papua (17.30%), Sulawesi (5.28%), and Sumatra (6.25%). This data indicates that the majority of the dormitory children come from Java, while the fewest come from Maluku.

Table 1. Youth

No.	Items	Score	Criteria	%
1	I am a young person who always keeps up with the times	1.164	High	79%
2	I grow and develop physically and spiritually in balance	1.052	High	72%
3	I am a dynamic person	1.021	Medium	70%
4	My life is oriented towards the future	1.150	High	78%
5	I am an open-minded person	908	Medium	62%
6	I am a creative person	1.015	Medium	69%
7	I am an empathetic person	1.107	High	76%
8	I am brave to stand out	970	Medium	66%
9	I engage in various activities to express my identity	975	Medium	66%
10	I need recognition for my existence	934	Medium	64%

(Source: research data, 2022)

Table 1 shows the results of the youth variable study. For statement number 1, 79% of respondents stated that they always keep up with the times. Statement number 2 shows that 72% of respondents claim to grow and develop physically and spiritually in balance. 70% of respondents indicated that they are dynamic individuals according to statement number 3. Statement number 4 reveals that 78% of respondents are future-oriented. Statement number 5 shows that only 62% of respondents consider themselves open-minded. For statement number 6, 69% of respondents regard themselves as creative individuals. 76% of respondents agree that they are empathetic according to statement number 7. Statements number 8 and 9 show

the same value, with 66% of respondents stating that they are brave to stand out and engage in various activities to express their identity. For statement number 10, 64% of respondents feel they need recognition for their existence.

The percentage index shows that statements number 1, 2, 4, and 7 fall into the high category. Meanwhile, statements number 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 fall into the medium category. The youth variable in this study only includes high and medium categories, with no low category.

The findings of this study indicate that the indicators for statements number 1, 4, and 7 are characteristic traits of the youth at Kosayu Dormitory. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the respondents possess empathy, always keep up with the times, and are future-oriented.

Today's youth, represented by the children of Kosayu Dormitory, exhibit three main characteristics. First, they always keep up with the times in various aspects such as lifestyle, fashion, and mindset. They follow current trends. Second, they have empathy for others. Although some young people may focus only on themselves, the majority at Kosayu Dormitory show empathy. Third, they have a future orientation. Despite keeping up with the times, they maintain hope and focus on a bright future, with the progress of the times helping them achieve their goals. This attitude should be firmly upheld by every young person today.

Table 2. Social Media and Youth

No.	Items	Score	Criteria	%
11	I check social media every day.	1.342	High	92%
12	I am an active person on social media.	983	Medium	67%
13	I understand the meaning of social media correctly.	1.123	High	77%
14	I understand the different types of social media.	1.055	High	72%
15	I get various positive things through social media.	1.158	High	79%
16	Social media makes me more caring towards others.	987	Medium	67%
17	I follow social media accounts that enhance my knowledge of faith.	894	Medium	61%
18	I am aware of both the positive and negative impacts of using social media.	1.305	High	89%
19	I get various positive things from social media.	1.134	High	77%
20	I tend to be drawn towards negative aspects on social media.	551	Low	37%

(Source: research data, 2022)

Table 2 shows the results of the social media variable study. In statement number 11, 92% of respondents agree that they access social media every day. Statement number 12 reveals that 67% of respondents consider themselves active on social media. For statement number 13, 77% of respondents say they understand the meaning of social media correctly. Statement number 14 shows that 72% of respondents understand the different types of social media. In statement number 15, 79% of respondents report that they gain various positive things through social media. For statement number 16, 67% of respondents state that social media makes them more caring towards others. Statement number 17 shows that 61% of respondents follow social media accounts that enhance their faith knowledge. Statement number 18 reveals that 89% of respondents are aware of the positive and negative impacts of social media use. In statement Doren (2024)/ Social ethics of young people.

number 19, 77% of respondents get various positive things from social media. For statement number 20, 37% of respondents indicate that they tend to engage in negative activities on social media.

The percentage index shows that statements number 11, 13, 14, 15, 18, and 19 fall into the high category. Statements number 12, 16, and 17 fall into the medium category, and statement number 20 falls into the low category. These three categories appear in the social media variable.

The study finds that the indicators for statements number 11 (accessing social media every day), number 15 (gaining various positive things through social media), and number 18 (being aware of the positive and negative impacts of social media use) are characteristic of social media use among youth at Kosayu Dormitory. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that respondents access social media daily, gain various positive benefits from it, and are aware of both its positive and negative impacts. Additionally, the social media variable shows an interesting aspect with the lowest score, statement number 20 (tending to engage in negative activities on social media).

Youth at Kosayu Dormitory exhibit three main characteristics in their use of social media. First, they access social media every day. They browse the web, comment on posts, like content, seek information, update their status, and more as part of their daily routine. Second, they gain various positive benefits from social media. Although social media can lead them to negative aspects, they derive many positive and useful things for their lives. Third, they are aware of both the positive and negative impacts of social media use. Even though they access social media daily, they understand the effects of its use on their lives.

An interesting point is that even though they are aware of the positive and negative impacts of social media use, they still tend to engage in negative activities (Tekwan et al., 2022). Ideally, they should be more self-aware to avoid falling into negative behaviors such as posting negative comments, mocking others, accessing pornography, misusing photos, and so on (Tarihoran et al., 2024). The question arises: why does this happen? The reason is that the youth's age drives them to try new things, including negative ones, due to their high level of curiosity (Sinaga et al., 2023).

Table 3. Ethics and Youth

No.	Items	Score	Criteria	%
21	I understand the meaning of ethics.	1.206	High	82%
22	I do not engage in body shaming on social media.	1.150	High	78%
23	I avoid making racist comments on social media.	1.187	High	81%
24	I avoid theological debates on social media.	1.111	High	76%
25	I do not spread negative content on social media.	1.195	High	82%

(Source: research data, 2022)

Table 3 shows the results of the social ethics variable study. In statement number 21, 82% of respondents say they understand the meaning of ethics. For statement number 22, 78% of respondents report that they do not engage in body shaming on social media. Statement number 23 reveals that 81% of respondents avoid making racist comments on social media. In statement number 24, 76% of respondents say they avoid theological debates on social media.

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For statement number 25, 82% of respondents agree that they do not post negative content on social media.

The percentage index indicates that all questions regarding social ethics fall into the high category. There are no questions in the medium or low categories for this variable.

The study finds that the indicators for statements number 21 (understanding the meaning of ethics), number 25 (not posting negative content on social media), and number 23 (avoiding racist comments on social media) are characteristic of social ethics among youth at Kosayu Dormitory. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that respondents understand the meaning of ethics, do not post negative content, and avoid making racist comments on social media (Budiono et al, 2022).

Therefore, it can be concluded that there are three characteristics of social ethics among youth at Kosayu Dormitory: First, the youth at Kosayu Dormitory understand the meaning of ethics (Yuniarto et al., 2023). Although they are young people who keep up with the times and are active on social media every day, they have a good understanding of the ethics they should adhere to (Tarihoran et al., 2024). Because they understand ethics well, the second characteristic is that the youth at Kosayu Dormitory do not post negative content on social media, and the third characteristic is that they avoid making racist comments on social media. These traits are evident in the environment of the youth living at Kosayu Dormitory (Firmanto et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, the world is experiencing a new era often referred to as the digital age. Social media is a part of the digital era. Social media allows users to represent themselves, interact, collaborate, share, communicate with others, and form social bonds virtually. Social media connects users for communication and information sharing. Today's youth are well-acquainted with social media and have made it an integral part of their lives. As a result, social media can have both positive and negative influences on its users, especially the youth.

Youth are digital natives who are quite skilled in technology. They are always keeping up with the times, have a sense of empathy, and are oriented towards the future. Youth are the first group to quickly respond to and follow current trends. Despite this, they still retain a sense of empathy towards others. Although it is difficult to find empathetic youth nowadays, the comfort and attachment to social media can lead them to self-centered behavior. Youth must maintain a life orientation towards the future. In short, while youth can follow current trends, they must still direct themselves towards a bright future. The evolution of times should not destroy their future.

The Church reminds through several documents and papal recommendations that youth should continue to live with Christian ethics within the new culture. This new culture is life in the digital age and technological advancement. The Church views this not as something negative but as positive. The Church hopes that Christian youth can use technology and advanced media to proclaim the Gospel to others. The Church believes that youth can do even

more, as mentioned in the Church Document on the Internet no. 1. The Church also fosters attitudes by considering the context of the times that affect youth lives. The Church observes that social media influences their way of life, communication, thinking, and behavior. Social media has become one of the aspects that shape the identity of today's youth. Therefore, social ethics becomes an important guideline for youth. There are three things that can be done for youth: formation, participation, and dialogue.

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