

# The Influence of Social-Media on Cultural Integration: A Perspective on Digital Sociology

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## Abstract

Technological developments have made social media a part of people's daily lives. The ability of social media to cross geographical boundaries causes a culture change, especially in cultural integration. This research then aims to look at the role of social media in influencing cultural interactions in society. This research will be carried out using a descriptive qualitative approach. The data used in this research comes from various research results and previous studies that are still relevant. The results of this research then show that the presence of social media makes cultural integration more complicated. The presence of social media plays a key role but also provides new challenges in society. Therefore, the importance of wise use of social media in cultural integration is very necessary. To achieve deeper cultural integration, efforts need to be made to minimize risks such as filter bubbles, polarization, and cultural conflicts that can arise in the digital world.

**Keywords:** Social-Media, Cultural Integration, Digital Sociology.



## A. INTRODUCTION

Social media has experienced rapid growth in the last few decades and has become an integral part of everyday life. This phenomenon has significant implications for various aspects of social and cultural life. However, their role in changing and shaping cultural aspects, especially cultural integration, still requires deeper understanding. Cultural integration is an important process in today's global society, especially in facing the challenges of multiculturalism and globalization. Successful cultural integration can influence social stability, ethnic harmony, and the development of diverse societies. Thus, understanding the factors that influence cultural integration becomes very crucial (Wong et al., 2021).

This is where the role of social media becomes increasingly important. In the ever-expanding social media ecosystem, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds have access not only to communicate, but also to share cultural values, beliefs, and norms. This provides a unique opportunity to observe the influence of social media on the cultural integration process. However, with its positive potential, social media has also raised concerns. Issues such as filter bubbles, political polarization, and disinformation circulating through social media platforms have

sparked questions about whether social media as a whole has a positive or negative impact on cultural integration (Tai et al., 2023).

Along with the growth of social media, the field of study of digital sociology has expanded rapidly. Digital sociology provides a useful framework for understanding how social media influences social behavior and cultural integration processes in the digital era. Although there is much research on the influence of social media on various aspects of social life, research focusing on cultural integration is still relatively limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill this knowledge gap and provide deeper insight into the role of social media in the context of cultural integration (Lee, 2019).

Through the increasing number of social media users, these platforms have also become important spaces for multicultural communities and minority groups to voice their cultural identities. This raises interesting questions about how social media facilitates diverse cultural expressions in global society. In addition, as technology develops, social media continues to change and develop. With the emergence of new platforms and changes in usage trends, there is a need to understand the impact of social media evolution on continuous cultural integration (Vrikki & Malik, 2019).

By combining an understanding of social media, cultural integration, and a digital sociology framework, this research aims to look at how social media can influence cultural integration in today's digital era. This will help us better understand the role of social media in shaping an increasingly globally connected world.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Social Media**

The media serves as a mechanism or method for transmitting messages from communicators to their intended audiences. According to various experts in psychology, in human communication, the primary channels for conveying information are the five human senses, including vision and hearing. These senses receive messages, which are subsequently processed within the human mind, influencing and shaping one's attitudes towards a subject, prior to their translation into actions (Bian & Ji, 2021).

Social media refers to digital platforms that enable and promote social interaction. It leverages web-based technology to transform communication into an interactive exchange. Presently, several popular social media platforms include Blog, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Path, and Wikipedia. Another interpretation of social media, provided by Van Dijk, characterizes it as a media platform centered around users, facilitating their interactions and collaborations. Consequently, social media can be viewed as an online enabler that enhances connections among users and fosters social bonds (Imani & Rad & Banaeian, 2023).

As per Shirky, social media and social software serve as instruments to enhance users' capacity for sharing, collaborating among individuals, and collectively taking action, all of which occur beyond formal institutional or organizational structures. Social media revolves around the essence of humanity. Everyday individuals come

together to exchange ideas, cooperate, co-create, engage in thought-provoking discussions, seek companionship, identify potential partners, and form communities. Essentially, the utilization of social media plays a significant role in shaping our identities (Sæbø et al., 2020).

On the other hand, Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as a collection of online applications rooted in Web 2.0 principles and technology, enabling the generation and sharing of user-created content. Web 2.0 serves as the fundamental foundation for social media platforms. Social media manifests in diverse formats, encompassing social networks, online forums, blogs, microblogs, wikis, podcasts, images, videos, user ratings, and social bookmarking systems (Ali et al., 2021).

According to Kaplan and Haenlein, there are six types of social media, including Instagram, which are included in the social network category. Meanwhile, to be able to connect to Instagram social media, users must always have the internet active. The identification of this highly advanced communication capability has been referred to by various names, such as the internet, virtual communication platforms, superhighway media, and similar terms (John & Yunus, 2021). The advantage of this internet communication network is the speed of sending and obtaining information, and also as a shopticated data provider. Because 30 years ago people could not have imagined that internet-based computers would become a world library that could be accessed through one door called the World Wide Word (www). Another advantage of the internet is that it functions as an interpersonal medium by sending messages in the form of electronic mail (e-mail) (Dutta et al., 2020).

The proliferation of social media platforms has brought about numerous advantages, allowing individuals from diverse regions to engage in convenient and cost-effective communication as compared to traditional telephone use. Furthermore, social networking sites have facilitated the rapid dissemination of information. Nevertheless, there are also adverse effects associated with social media. These include a decline in direct, in-person interpersonal interactions, the rise of excessive addiction, and ethical and legal concerns arising from content that breaches moral, privacy, and regulatory standards (Varadarajan et al., 2022).

Andreas M. Kaplan and Michael Haenlein devised a categorization system for the various types of social media based on their usage characteristics. According to their framework, social media can be classified into six categories:

- a. Collaborative Website Projects: In this category, users are granted the ability to modify, add, or remove content found on the website collectively. An example is Wikipedia.
- b. Blogs and Microblogs: Users have the freedom to express thoughts, feelings, experiences, statements, and criticisms on their blogs, as seen on platforms like Twitter.
- c. Content Sharing Platforms: On these websites, users share multimedia content such as e-books, videos, photos, and images with one another. Notable examples include Instagram and YouTube.

- d. Social Networking Sites: Users create personal, group, or social profiles, granting them the ability to connect and share information with others. Facebook is a prime example.
- e. Virtual Game Worlds: Within 3D applications, users can assume avatar forms and interact with others, both in avatar and real-life forms, commonly found in online gaming.
- f. Virtual Social Worlds: This category encompasses applications in the form of virtual worlds where users can exist and interact with others. These virtual social worlds are similar to virtual game worlds but offer more extensive interactions across various aspects of life, as exemplified by Second Life (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019).

## 2. Cultural Integration

Integration in many scientific fields is roughly defined as a form of unifying elements with different characters and classifications based on concepts, paradigms, and units. Broadly speaking, the word integration has the meaning of assimilation, bringing together, blending, and combining different things into one unified whole, which is different from its original form into something new. Meanwhile, in terms of terminology, in the social sciences, as in the sociology dictionary, integration means one of the eternal social problems of society, how various elements of society maintain unity, and how they integrate (Fernández-Mora et al., 2022).

There are two important ideas about integration in social science, namely integration based on "together values" following the theory of functionalism and integration based on "interdependence", following the theory of division of labor. However, this concept has received a lot of criticism because society seems too unified, and conflicts that occur in society are ignored (as if there were never any conflicts that occurred in society). The development of social integration and its systems is an effort to advance discussions about how elements of society maintain or do not maintain unity. Integration also refers to the process of uniting racial groups to become closer economically, socially, and politically (de et al., 2023).

Soekanto believes that integration means controlling conflict and deviation in a social system and creating a whole from certain elements. Meanwhile, cultural integration means the degree of functional dependence of the elements of a culture. 9 Even integration in anthropology also has several other meanings, such as the unification of several different cultures, into one cultural unit other than the culture of origin (usually called acculturation, diffusion, inculcation, and assimilation) (Wicaksono, 2021).

However, the category of cultural integration in anthropology is generally often interpreted as cultural change in a group of people, whether in the view of evolutionism, functionalism, or structuralism. Among these anthropological schools, no one disputes the occurrence of cultural integration in human life when there are cultural clashes between one human being and another. Although anthropological

schools have their emphasis on explaining the causes of cultural changes that occur in society (Sánchez-Villagra, 2022).

In cultural integration that occurs in society, there are four types of integration, namely diffusion, acculturation, assimilation, and inculturation. The four of them have certain characteristics because they have different goals and needs. For example, diffusion occurs in society because in society there is migration in a certain area far from the place of origin of the society, in the new place there is integration of the old culture with the new culture by adapting to new environmental conditions (Lebaka, 2020).

So, it can be concluded that cultural unity is a manifestation of human integration itself because cultural unity is also dynamic like the integration that occurs within humans. Balance is never complete but must always be fought for against the desire for inertia and centrifugal force, but humans need to prioritize objective centripetal force as the teleological direction that controls the world, to create a cosmos amidst the chaos that occurs (Lesch, 2020).

### **3. Digital Sociology**

At first, the term 'digital sociology' was not very well known as a special branch or piece of sociological science. This term is only used as the name of a course taught at a university in England. At that time, this vocabulary labeled digital was still less competitive with several other (new) sociological vocabularies, such as the sociology of technology, cyber sociology, and so on. This condition gradually changed when sociological scholars began to discuss and popularize this term in their academic works (Das & Paital, 2021). The first scientific writing known to contain the words 'digital sociology' was written by an American sociologist named Jonathan R. Wynn in 2009. In his writing, he saw that there is a very clear connection between technology and sociology. Apart from that, the article published in a scientific journal also talks about several tricks and methods in digital technology that can be used for various research and teaching purposes (Mannon & Camfield, 2019).

Next, there is the name Deborah Lupton, a sociologist and researcher from Australia who has studied media and digital, social, and cultural aspects related to public health. Very revolutionary in studying the benefits of social media and cyberspace for the research she carried out, Deborah became a very important and instrumental figure in pioneering and developing digital sociology as a scientific study. First of all, he gave a very impressive introduction to Australian social science researchers through writings he composed while he was at the University of Sydney (Watson & Lupton, 2022). In her description, Deborah said that the idea to popularize what she called digital sociology began when she accidentally saw the public's very high enthusiasm for one of her writings published on an online site, The Conversation. He was amazed because in just a few hours, his writing had been read by hundreds of people, and then a few days later it reached thousands of readers. She was truly amazed by the role of social media and the virtual world which turned out to be beyond what she had expected, so she wrote of her admiration: After this incident,

Deborah created a blog and several accounts on social media to support her academic activities (Finlayson, 2022). He registered himself on the social networks Twitter, Crikey, and Pinterest. From his surfing activities in cyberspace, he wrote tips and easy ways for sociologists to use social media for academic purposes. The notes and writings he worked on were then combined and developed into a study that he called digital sociology. What is clear is that this interesting experience when she wrote in The Conversation was the first step for Deborah to elaborate on a new world: the world of digital sociology (Nalaka & Diunugala, 2020).

In essence, digital sociology terminology is not that simple because in practice it has a much wider scope and coverage. What should be discussed in this study is not only technology, digital media, and how to use them, but also various kinds of influences from the use of digital tools on human sociological aspects, such as patterns of interaction, relationships between individuals, relationship patterns of social behavior, individual attitudes and actions, understanding of human identity and self-concept, and so on. This description is not the definitive and most perfect definition regarding the concept of digital sociology, but the conception is sufficient to describe the focus of this branch of sociology whose content is very broad (Couldry & Mejias, 2023).

### C. METHOD

This research will be carried out using a qualitative approach. The data used in this research comes from various research results and previous studies which still have relevance to the content of the research. The research data that has been collected will be processed so that the results of this research can then be found. Cultural integration through social media is an increasingly important subject in this digital era. Through a qualitative approach and the use of relevant data, it is hoped that we can provide a deeper understanding of how social media influences cultural integration, their role in cultural education, and the challenges that must be overcome in this context. Thus, it is hoped that this research can provide valuable insights for a global society that is increasingly connected through social media (Agustianti et al., 2022).

## D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The Role of Social-Media in Maintaining Cultural Identity

Social media has become a powerful platform to facilitate individuals and groups in maintaining and voicing their cultural identity. In this context, we can see several important roles played by social media in maintaining cultural diversity in the digital era. Social media allows individuals and groups to maintain their cultural identity by providing an open platform for self-expression. With posts, photos, videos, and other forms of content, social media users can share important aspects of their cultural identity with the world.

One concrete example of how social media facilitates the maintenance of cultural identity is through efforts to document cultural heritage. Groups such as

indigenous communities, ethnic groups, and cultural organizations often use social media platforms to upload photos, videos, and stories about their traditions, clothing, and rituals. Social media also allows cultural groups to share their cultural heritage with a wider audience. For example, traditional dance groups can upload their performances, while traditional music fans can share recordings and information about the music.

In the context of language, social media plays an important role in promoting and maintaining distinctive languages. Minority language communities can use this platform to teach their language to the younger generation, hold online lessons, or even spread literature and stories in that language. Social media also supports efforts to preserve traditions and cultural values. Communities that wish to promote certain values, such as environmental ethics, gender equality, or religious tolerance, can use social media as a tool to educate and mobilize people.

In addition, social media presents an opportunity for individuals to connect with others who share similar interests and cultural identities, even if they are located in geographically distant locations. This creates strong networks and communities that help in maintaining cultural identity. A prominent example is the cultural diaspora who use social media to stay connected to their cultural roots. They can share stories, and traditional food recipes, or even organize cultural events that bring together members of the diaspora from different countries.

Social media can also promote awareness about relevant cultural issues, such as environmental conservation, human rights, or the preservation of endangered cultural heritage. Campaigns, petitions, and discussions can take place effectively through this platform. It's important to remember that social media also has negative impacts, such as the potential to fuel cultural stereotypes or conflict. Therefore, social media users need to speak wisely and sensitively about cultural issues. It can be said that the presence of social media has a significant role in maintaining and voicing cultural identity. Through this platform, individuals and groups can share, promote, and preserve important aspects of their culture, thereby maintaining cultural diversity in this digital era. However, wise and responsible use of social media is also important to avoid negative impacts on cultural integration.

## **2. The Impact of Social-Media on Intercultural Communication**

Social media has opened the door to easier and more intensive intercultural interactions, overcoming geographical boundaries and facilitating intercultural exchange and deeper cross-cultural understanding. However, while social media can enrich intercultural interactions, there is also the potential for cultural conflict to emerge which must be taken into account. Social media enables intercultural interactions across geographical boundaries by removing traditional communication barriers. People from different countries and cultures can easily communicate, share experiences, and build relationships through social media platforms without needing to be physically present. For example, social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter allow individuals to follow accounts and connect with people from all over

the world. This creates opportunities to understand the daily lives, cultures, and worldviews of people from different backgrounds.

The presence of social media also facilitates intercultural exchange through various groups, forums, and online communities. For example, platforms like Reddit have various subforums that encourage discussion and exchange of information on various cultural topics from around the world. Intercultural interactions on social media often involve the exchange of information about food, music, art, and cultural traditions. People can share recipes, and music videos, or even host virtual events to introduce others to their culture.

However, there is a potential for cultural conflict in social media interactions. Openness and anonymity in cyberspace can lead to discriminatory or racist comments and behavior that undermine cross-cultural understanding and harmony. Cultural conflicts on social media often arise in the form of heated debates regarding sensitive issues such as religion, politics, or ethnicity. Open discussion on social media can exacerbate tensions and increase polarization. Along with this, filter bubbles, namely social media users who tend to only be exposed to views and information that match their beliefs, can reinforce cultural stereotypes and prejudices.

It is important to remember that in social media interactions involving different cultures, sensitivity and empathy are essential. Respecting differences and maintaining an open dialogue is key to strengthening positive cross-cultural understanding. In addition, education about cultural sensitivity and training in communicating cross-culturally can help overcome potential conflicts in social media interactions. It can be concluded that social media has opened the door to easier and more intensive intercultural interactions, enabling positive intercultural exchanges. However, we must also be aware of potential cultural conflicts that may arise and try to minimize them by communicating wisely, sensitively, and openly in cyberspace.

### **3. The Influence of Social-Media on the Dissemination of Cultural Information**

Social media has become a powerful means of disseminating cultural information globally. Social media has changed the way cultural information is spread around the world. They provide instant access to various aspects of culture, such as food, music, fashion, and art, and allow this information to spread quickly to all corners of the world. One of the important roles of social media is to popularize cultural trends. An example is culinary trends. Certain restaurants or cuisines that were previously only known in certain countries can now become globally popular due to food photos and reviews shared on social media. The existence of social media has also become a platform for artists, musicians, and fashion designers to promote their work internationally. They can use social media to share their work, reach a wider audience, and inspire new cultural trends.

But of course, despite its positive impact, social media also has the potential risk of cultural distortion. Sometimes, cultural information can be presented inaccurately or overly simplified to keep up with trends or gain attention. Additionally, cultural stereotypes can also be reinforced through social media. For

example, people can become trapped in a narrow view of a particular culture based on the limited information they see on social media. It's important to realize that social media often features well-curated and curated slices of life and culture that are curated for display. This can create views that do not represent more complex cultural realities.

However, social media also provides individuals and communities with the ability to challenge stereotypes and cultural distortions. They can share more nuanced and accurate stories, experiences, and views. The role of social media in disseminating cultural information also has a major impact on the tourism industry. Tourist destinations promoted on social media often become popular, leading to an increase in tourist numbers. In a world increasingly connected through social media, users need to develop strong media literacy and critical skills in assessing the cultural information they consume. This can help avoid the spread of inaccurate or distorted information.

#### **4. Social Media as a Place for Cultural Education**

Social media has become an effective cultural education tool by providing a platform that allows instant access to cultural information from around the world. With various features such as videos, images, and text, social media can facilitate interesting and interactive cultural learning. One prominent example is the language and culture teaching program. For example, an Instagram or YouTube account can be used to share video lessons about languages, traditional dances, and daily customs from various cultures. Social media can also be used to present cultural history. Interesting historical content such as archival images, documentary videos, or Twitter threads about specific historical events can help young people understand their cultural heritage more dynamically.

Cultural education initiatives on social media can integrate interactive elements, such as cultural quizzes or challenges that engage audiences to actively participate in learning. Concrete examples of cultural education programs via social media include Instagram accounts that share information about cultural celebrations, traditional music, and myths from various countries. Users can follow these accounts to broaden their understanding of global culture. In addition, many non-profit organizations and educational institutions have adopted social media as a means of promoting deeper cultural understanding. They may host webinars, workshops, or online discussions that focus on specific cultural topics.

Challenges in using social media as an effective cultural education platform include ensuring that the content shared is accurate and academic. In an era of abundant information, it is important to filter reliable sources of information. Another difficulty is maintaining audience interest and engagement. In a world of social media full of distractions, cultural educators need to develop engaging strategies to maintain young people's interest in cultural learning. Another challenge is maintaining cultural diversity and pluralism in cultural education on social media. As educators, it is necessary to ensure that all cultures are respected and represented fairly.

This shows that social media has become a powerful platform for cultural education. They allow easy access to cultural and historical information, helping broaden young people's understanding of global culture. Despite the challenges, the potential for using social media as an effective cultural education tool is enormous, and efforts must continue to be made to maximize its benefits.

## 5. Challenges in Cultural Integration through Social-Media

Cultural integration through social media is a complex process, in which various challenges need to be overcome to achieve deeper cultural understanding and intercultural harmony. The debate that often arises is regarding the positive and negative effects of social media on cultural integration. On the one hand, social media allows different cultures to interact and share experiences globally. However, on the other hand, there are concerns that social media can strengthen cultural inequalities and trigger intercultural conflicts.

The impact of filter bubbles is a serious challenge in cultural integration through social media. Filter bubbles refer to the phenomenon where social media users tend to only be exposed to views and information that align with their beliefs. This can result in an inability to understand different cultural views. Filter bubbles can also fuel cultural polarization, where groups with different cultural views become increasingly isolated from each other. This can hinder efforts at healthy cultural integration and intercultural harmony.

In the digital environment, privacy and security challenges are critical. To share cultural information, social media users may inadvertently reveal personal or cultural information that could be misused. Additionally, there is a risk that cultural information shared on social media could be misused or disinforming, which could result in a false understanding of a particular culture. Cultural integration through social media is also faced with language challenges. In cross-cultural communication, language can be a barrier, and inaccurate translations can cause conflict or confusion.

Lack of accessibility and digital literacy are other challenges that need to be addressed. Some communities may not have adequate access to social media, or may not have sufficient understanding of how to use it for cultural integration. The use of social media by governments or certain groups for political or propaganda purposes can also disrupt healthy cultural integration efforts. Information conveyed with political motivation can influence cultural perceptions. Challenges related to intellectual property rights also arise in sharing cultural information on social media. There is a risk that cultural works could be misused or stolen without permission, which could harm the cultural community.

Generally, cultural integration through social media is a complex process with various challenges. While social media has great potential to enrich our cultural understanding, it is important to overcome filter bubbles, polarization, privacy, and security to ensure that intercultural interactions via social media platforms go well and provide positive benefits for global society.

## E. CONCLUSION

In a digital era dominated by social media, cultural integration has become more interesting and complicated than ever. Social media plays a key role in facilitating the exchange of cultural information, cross-cultural understanding, and cultural heritage preservation efforts. However, along with the benefits, we also have to face various challenges which include the risks of distortion, polarization, and information security. Therefore, strong media awareness and literacy are essential in ensuring that social media is used wisely and positively in the context of cultural integration. The importance of responsible use of social media in supporting cultural integration cannot be understated. With a variety of cultural education initiatives, positive cultural exchange, and open dialogue, social media has great potential to enrich our understanding of global culture. However, to achieve deeper cultural integration and intercultural harmony, we need to continue working to minimize risks such as filter bubbles, polarization, and cultural conflicts that can arise in the digital world. With a careful approach and strong collaboration, social media can be a powerful tool in promoting better cultural understanding around the world.

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