The Ethics of Digital Communication and Message Sharing on Social Media

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Abstract: The present research examines the ethical concerns of social media users in sharing information and digital interaction. Adopting a phenomenological approach, 20 students from two state universities in Makassar South Sulawesi were invited to an interview regarding the issues. The findings illustrate four important ethics concerning digital communication and sharing information on social media: first social media users should convey messages honestly; second, they must be responsible in their words and deeds; third, they have to be polite to others; fourth they have to be tolerant of differences. In addition, this study argues that social media content creators and users respect ethnic, religious, racial, and inter-group diversity in sharing information.

Keywords: Social media ethic, Muslim students, sharing information, cyber culture.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji problem etis para pengguna media sosial dalam berbagi informasi dan melakukan interaksi digital. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan fenomenologis, peneliti melakukan interview 20 mahasiswa dari dua perguruan tinggi negeri di Makassar Sulawesi Selatan untuk menggali informasi terkait etika berbagi informasi di media sosial. Hasil studi menunjukkan adanya empat etika penting dalam melakukan komunikasi digital dan berbagi informasi di media sosial: pertama, pengguna media sosial harus menyampaikan pesan dengan jujur; kedua, mereka harus bertanggung jawab dalam perkataan dan perbuatannya; ketiga, mereka harus bersikap sopan terhadap orang lain; keempat mereka harus toleran terhadap perbedaan. Selain itu, studi ini berpendapat berargumen bahwa pengguna dan pembuat konten media sosial harus menghormati keberagaman suku, agama, ras, dan antar kelompok dalam berbagi informasi.

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Introduction

The use of various social media platforms on the internet should create ethical, positive, creative and innovative symbolic interactions for netizens. Like Just as interactions in the lived social world directly, the interactions in cyberspace also require ethical values in order to make cyber social media become a public space that is comfortable, safe and beneficial for everyone. However, today's online domain has witnessed the proliferation of unethical communication through an overwhelming amount of hoaxes information, sarcasm, bullying, gambling, and various modes of online fraud. It is evident, that public awareness of ethical values is needed to antidote to the contamination of the information environment, such as university students.

Social media is an online application used in social interactions such as acquaintances, outreach, creating communities, displaying personal information, exchanging experiences, posting text, photos, and videos, or as a medium for learning, business, government information, entertainment media, and many other functions. There are several popular social media, such as *Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram*, and *WhatsApp* through which the users are able to communicate to one or many in the real time and everywhere directly.

Social order in the digital era is largely determined by the responsibility of users to share messages in interactions via social media. Interaction involvement is someone's participation in sharing messages on social media. This requires awareness to convey the right message to others. Also responds to messages effectively. Interaction is a basic element of mastering interpersonal communication. Erving Goffman (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009) observed that society is governed by meanings and interpretations attributed verbally and nonverbally so that inappropriate messages can damage the social order.

According to B. K. Lewis social media refers to a digital technology that allows people to connect, interact, produce, and share message content(Nasrullah, 2016). For example, Facebook provides a "wall" so that users can express what they are thinking, witnessing, experiencing about the circumstances around them, or their responses to various situations that are currently developing. Facebook also

provides group facilities such as high school alumni groups, hobbies or professions. The way Facebook groups work is like a mailing list.

Andriani (2019) cites some experts' opinions regarding social media, namely Taprial & Kanwar (2012) that social media is a form of electronic communication used by netizens to disseminate information, thoughts, personal messages, and other messages. Seyfi and Guven (2016) define social media as an application to represent oneself to people by sharing everything that happens to them. Similarly, Gradaniru (2018) states that social media is a tool used by individuals to express ideas, write, read or seek information as self-representation with various purposes according to user needs.

To improve the quality of using social media, it is necessary to have user ethics (netiquette), so the messages conveyed are in accordance with the culture of the Indonesian and religious values to create an intelligent, peaceful, and noble society. The hope that social media users prioritize ethics still needs to be improved. Data issued by the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo), Indonesia has asserted that there were around 8,000 cases of hoax news circulating on social media each year. A drastic increase occurred in 2016, namely around 4600 cases (Yuliani 2017; Yunita 2017 in Andriani 2019). Thus the application of ethical values in social media is increasingly important to overcome various negative information and make social media a means of digital interaction in a plural society that upholds human dignity.

Social media ethics can be taught in schools formally or informally through digital literacy programs in the community. Understanding and applying the ethical values of community-based social media as part of digital literacy can be referred to as non-formal education for users. The Ministry of Education and Culture has mentioned the UNESCO declaration regarding information literacy as the ability to identify, determine, find, evaluate, create effectively and in an organized manner, use and communicate information to address various problems that every individual must have in an information society (Husain, 2022).. Yuniarto and Yudha (2021) call digital literacy very important as strengthening character education towards the era of

society 5.0 which is reflected in formal and non-formal education and all levels of learning in various fields.

The behavior of social media users in Indonesia, where the majority of young people still tend to be consumptive and have not taken the internet seriously for productive activities such as online shops or learning media. The internet is still mostly used for chatting, browsing, or just viewing photos and videos (Alinurdin, 2018). Users have been spoiled with various facilities and features available on social media. If used without control or ignoring rules, ethics and moral values, then social media can have various negative impacts such as the spread of hoax news, gambling, pornography, fraud, defamation and bullying.

Social Media Ethics

Ethics comes from the Greek word "ethos", which means character, nature, nature or how people tend to behave. Meanwhile, the word moral comes from the Latin mores, which means the habits of a group. Morals are guidelines or general ideas externally according to the rules of a group. Etymologically, ethics and morals refer to individual and social values (Ward, 2011). Ethics shows the degree of life of a person or group. High-low individual or social position in the view of humans and God, is determined by the ethical quality of the individual or social group.

The Prophet Muhammad Saw is the noblest human being in morality (QS. Al-Qalam/68:40), and he is as a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for anyone (QS. Al-Ahzab/33:21), and who was sent to the world to perfect human morals (HR. Al-Baihaqi). Tike (2012) states, that morality in Islam is broader than ethics. Ethics is related to courtesy between humans and outward behavior. Meanwhile, morals are related to inner and outer behavior, not only to humans but also to the creator and the universe. Western ethics are sourced from philosophy and rational thought, while Islamic ethics (morals) are sourced from the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad Saw.

Ethics is the study of values, what is important and what is not important, what is good and bad, right and wrong, useful or useless which guides behavior according to expected norms. Ethics also means the character, nature, nature or tendency of people to behave. Ethics can be divided into three, namely (1) Descriptive ethics which describes moral behavior in a broad sense such as customs, good and bad assumptions, and actions that are permissible or not. Experts describe ethics and do not pass judgment; (2) Normative ethics, namely judgments about human behavior, but not neutral like descriptive ethics, but provides an assessment so that ethics is implemented and determines whether or not people's behavior is right or wrong. Normative ethics is not descriptive but prescriptive (ordered); (3) Meta-ethics, namely the special meaning of ethics in certain sentences or contexts, for example the sentence that organ donors are "good" compared to cars is good. The meaning of the word good in the two sentences has a different meaning (Bertens, 2007).

With regard to cyber culture, every user should recognize and use ethics in social media. This is intended so that ethics can protect every user from actions that are detrimental or violate the law. Fahrimal (2018) refers to netiquette as rules and procedures for using the internet as a means of communication or data exchange between groups of people in a mediated system. Just like ethics in the real world, netiquette also encourages users to comply with ethical and moral rules to create a shared space that is comfortable, calm, and harmonious. According to Ginting et al (2021), social media ethics need to be maintained in order to get good and positive things. Social media will affect people's lives. Technological advances can make politeness norms fade away, lower the ethics and morals of society so that we need to address the use of social media wisely according to the ethics of Indonesian society.

The principles of communication in cyberspace (internet) and the real world are basically the same. Each requires skills and ethics as guidance. According to Mutiah, et al (2019) some ethics that need to be considered in using social media among users are: *first*, users are no allowed to use harsh words, porn or offend SARA. Second, users are

forbidden to post fake statuses. Third, internet users and content creators have to ask for permission and make proper attribution when they intentionally copy and paste content from copy and paste copyrighted articles or images from various sources, such as books, articles, or websites. Wahyudin and Karimah (2016) stated that social media should be a vehicle for communication to create harmonization. Social media places a dialogue process that improves people's welfare as well as a platform for the dissemination of rational and soothing ideas.

Ethics is basically the study of values, what is important and what is not important, what is good and what is bad, right and wrong, useful or useless. Ethics is a guide in behaving according to the expected norms. Ethics provides a variety of options to distinguish between the better and the less good in various situations. Ethics involves questions of right and wrong, good and bad. What is right and wrong, good and bad is not always agreed because it depends on the values held by a person or community. Ethics also means the science of good and bad; or a set of values held by society to create harmony and benefit for fellow human beings and the surrounding environment.

Media ethics has evolved from mainstream media (newspapers, radio, television) to new media such as Twitter, blogs, citizen journalists and social media. Ethics is increasingly needed with the emergence of various new professions in new media such as influencers, validators, and facilitators. Ethics is needed by citizens who use new media or anyone who carries out journalistic activities (creating, processing, and distributing messages in digital media), professionals, amateurs, and the general public who use the internet.

One of the largest groups of social media users is college students. According to data from the Indonesian Association of Internet Service Providers (2018), students as social media users achieved a penetration of 92.2%, but the facts show that there are still various violations of communication ethics such as comments "bacot", "Njrr", and "Idiot" (Afriani and Azmi, 2020). Good communication ethics on social media include: not saying harsh, provocative, pornographic or SARA words; do not post false statuses; do not copy and paste copyrighted text or images, and provide appropriate comments (Dewi, 2019).

Ethical guidelines on social media include: being constructive, comfortable, remembering other people, do not create tension, choose the right words, avoid excessive emoticons, accept different views, and there is no absolute freedom of opinion so you need to limit yourself and be selective (Fahrimal, 2018). On social media, slang is also developing, namely language variations with new, fast-changing vocabulary used by young people to communicate. Slang, among others, is used to joke, attract attention, cliché words, enrich language and secrecy (Rosalina, et al, 2020).

Social media has had various benefits if used ethically. The benefits of social media include increasing customer engagement through public relations strategies, such as digital storytelling conducted by Home of Humans on Instagram (Saudah et al, 2022). Social media is also used by the Calabai community for business and job promotion as indo' botting, self-actualization, expression, and friendship (Bahfiarti, et al, 2021). Social media can also be a cyber da'wah (Naqqiyah et al, 2022) with various themes and multimedia formats (Anshar, 2019) based on the needs of the audience.

This research used a qualitative method to examine the meaning that comes from the social problems studied (Creswell, 2010). Further, this research approach is phenomenology used to endeavor to find out the experiences of internet users in applying ethical values while using social media platforms. The respondents of this research are students of Da'wah and Communication Faculty (FDK) at UIN Alauddin Makassar and students of FMIPA at Makassar State University (UNM).

The data sources for this research were obtained from interviews with 20 students who became informants, consisting of 6 students majoring in Communication Studies, 5 students majoring in Journalism, 6 students

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majoring in Da'wah Management at UIN Alauddin Makassar (May 2021), and 3 students majoring in Biology Education at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Makassar State University (March 2023).

Meanwhile secondary data was collected from printed and electronic documents related to the research focus. The data analysis technique used in this study was an interactive model from Miles & Huberman (1992: 20) which consists of three steps: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) make a conclusion.

Result and Discussion

Ethics is composed of values used in human life. Value is everything that is considered true, important, and good for humans that must be followed and applied in personal and social life. Value means having a high and important position in this life. Nanda and Warms (1998) in Samovar et al (2010) state that values are shared ideas about what is good, right, and beautiful that underline cultural patterns and direct society in response to the social and physical environment. Values are very important position in life because values represent what is expected or desired, needed and prohibited. Something very good is worth (+) and is pursued by humans; whereas something very bad is worth (-) and is avoided by humans. Ethics contains values not only guidelines for behavior, but also the criteria for that behavior can be measured and violations can be punished.

Based on the results of interviews with informants, it was found that there are very important ethical values applied in social media. Ethical values are not only a guide in conveying messages, but also serve as a user character to distinguish between useful and unhelpful, important and unimportant, good and bad messages. The application of ethical values in social media is a form of (non-formal) public education that will benefit and overcome various evils such as the spread of hoaxes, fraud, defamation, gambling, and so on.

The results of interviews with informants, students of FDK at UIN Alauddin Makassar and and students of FMIPA UNM, show four important ethical values with regard to communication on social media as follows:

Deliver the Message Honestly

According to the informants, the first value that students need to apply in using social media is honesty. This honest nature is one of the core of character education. Honesty is the foundation for upholding the values of goodness and truth. On the other hand, violations of honesty, such as lying, betrayal, and cheating, are a source of damage to society, such as corruption and other violations.

Honest word in Arabic "As-shidqu" or "shidiq" which means real or true. The opposite of the honest word is "al-kadzibu" which means lying. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary: the word honest means straight hearted, not lying, not cheating. In addition, being honest also means stating what is, being open, consistent, trustworthy, not cheating, or saying and providing information in accordance with the actual reality (Amin, 2017). Honesty is needed in all areas of life, for example, in education, sports, and the military (Lase and Halawa, 2022), as well as in communicating on social media. The informants confirmed that:

"The values that should be applied in using social media are a sense of honesty, because it's hard for us to deny that the various information that is spread behind the media sometimes conveys inappropriate information or hoaxes." (Informant 1)

By applying honest values, social media users will convey correct and useful information to society. Not spreading lies, pitting against each other, humiliating, bullying, or other bad information.

"Honestly, not spreading hoaxes is the most important value in social media ethics. Because as good social media users we have to apply a number of these things so that we can be comfortable using social media as well as other people involved in our social media. That way we can stop various crimes on social media." (Informant 2)

"When someone uses social media honestly, he can build trust and safety in online interactions. Without honest values, social media users can spread fake news or inaccurate information that can harm other people or certain groups." (Informant 3)

Other informants emphasized that honesty is the main value that social media users need to apply. The value of honesty is not only to be spoken but to be practiced in daily behavior and also when communicating on social media.

"The most important value of honesty is applied in the use of social media because the value of honesty is so that social media users are not easy to create and post hoax information when using social media." (Informant 4)

"The values that are important to apply in the use of social media are honesty and responsibility. Because when someone uses social media to send or disseminate information, he must have an honest nature so that the news or information he conveys is indeed a fact, not a hoax." (Informant 5)

When communicating and disseminating messages on social media, honesty is the main value. Various social media used by the community can be more useful among users by applying the values of honesty. Informants said the use of social media such as Facebook and Instagram requires honesty from users.

"Social media is virtual media, so we must be careful in conveying and receiving existing information. Honesty is very important when using Instagram because there are many people who are not responsible for the information that is circulating. Many of them misuse anything, such as the example of persons who disguise themselves as places to donate to Palestinians." (Informant 6)

Thus, the value of being honest or honesty is a necessity for social media users, especially students, so that in conveying information, prioritizing the values of truth, reality, according to facts, and not spreading news that is not true or hoax. The spread of fake news will cause various problems in society. With the value of honesty, any information conveyed or obtained on social media can be trusted.

Being Responsible in Words and Actions

Responsibility is a person's attitude and behavior to carry out their duties and obligations, which should be done to oneself, society, the environment, and God Almighty (Rahayu, 2016). Responsibility is an attitude in a person who shows an attitude of knowing and carrying out what is expected of others. Responsibility also means the condition of being obliged to bear everything for the actions that have been done (Syifa et al, 2022). One very important character is the responsibility that has been pursued since elementary school education (Gestiardi and Suyitno, 2021) as well as non-formal education in the community. Being responsible in the use of social media means that users can guarantee that the messages conveyed are true and useful for the community, not spreading fake news or deceiving others.

The values of responsibility need to be owned not only in education at school but also in everyday community education on the use of social media among students. The informant emphasized that the second value that needs to be applied in social media ethics is being responsible for the messages conveyed according to facts and giving goodness to readers. Several informants stated as follows:

"The value of responsibility is very important in the use of social media because the use of social media can have a significant impact on oneself, others and society as a whole." (Informant 7)

Other informants also confirmed that:

"Responsibility in using social media is very important because without it everyone will use social media arbitrarily without thinking about the people around them." (Informant 8)

"Responsible for the information we convey which has been guaranteed to be true." (Informant 9)

In accordance with this opinion, other informants also explained:

"The main value in using social media is being able to use social media as its function and think about the negative effects of using social media incorrectly, such as spreading hoaxes. Values are important because we can prevent and educate ourselves so as not to do negative things that can harm others and ourselves. It is important when using social media." (Informant 10)

The value of responsibility in the use of social media is needed so that the information conveyed does not cause problems in society such as the spread of hoaxes, slander, bullying, or defamation.

"Responsibility is the main ethical value of social media. The reason: responsibility plays a very important role in the use of the media because why when we want to spread the news widely it has to match the facts that are happening on the ground." (Informant 11)

"Responsibility for the information we convey that has been guaranteed to be true." (Informant 12)

Another informant explained that:

"The main values are honest, responsible and wise. Because if we apply the three values above then we will learn to be someone who is good at social media, and does not harm anyone in social media." (Informant 13)

Other informants also emphasized the importance of the value of responsibility in social media as one of Islamic values.

"For me, it is based on Islamic values with strong faith accompanied by a sense of honesty and responsibility. A sense of honesty and responsibility makes us wiser and able to understand mistakes that occur so that we are able to avoid or prevent them and our faith becomes a stronghold that continuously does good." (Informant 14)

"There are two important social media ethical values. First, responsibility. Whatever information we have shared on social media is our responsibility. Second, to be honest, honesty is really important in social media." (Informant 15)

"With the value of responsibility as a social media user, you will be more careful in spreading information or responding to that information, whether the information is factual or mere hoax. With that value, we will use social media wisely." (Informant 16)

Based on the acknowledgment from informants that the value of responsibility is very important to be applied in the use of social media because the value of responsibility is the basis for conveying information according to the needs of the community and also means

being able to guarantee the truth of all information that is disseminated in accordance with actual data and facts.

Polite to Others

The third etiquette that is important to apply in the ethics of social media for society, especially among students, is politeness. The ethical value of politeness is very much needed in communicating and interacting on social media as well as in everyday life.

Politeness is an individual behavior that respects, and is friendly towards people who interact with it. Manners also mean upholding the values of respect, respect, not arrogant, and having a noble character. This form of courtesy is shown through language that does not belittle or demean other people (Juwita, 2017). The importance of this polite value is also to overcome various unethical behaviors that are often carried out, especially by youth and adolescents, such as violations on the highway, not caring about the social environment, or saying inappropriate words to parents or teachers.

According to the informant of this study, it is very important to apply polite values on social media, not to offend SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group) when communicating or exchanging information in cyberspace. The embodiment of this courtesy is behavior that respects others through good language, respect, not belittling, demeaning, or making fun of other people. Politeness shows an orderly, refined, and respectful attitude through words, attitudes or actions.

"An important value in social media ethics is: politeness. Because politeness is directly related to the way a person communicates on social media. A good social media user is one who is polite and wise in creating and spreading messages." (Informant 17)

"Mutual respect and appreciation is the most important, especially in the speech that is poured into type, you can't belittle anyone." (Informant 12)

Politeness is also practiced at school, including always dressing neatly, greeting friends, regularly praying, and speaking kind words (Putra, et al, 2020). Then how to show courtesy on social media?

Social media as a public space requires media ethics so that users always maintain the values of kindness, courtesy, and being respectful interact to friends or people

"Mandate means we can be trusted with what is conveyed. Mutual respect and respect is the most important, especially in the speech that is written in type, you can't belittle anyone." (Informant 9)

Polite words are not only shown when communicating directly, but also when using social media. Politeness means speaking softly, not criticizing or insulting others and trying to interact in a positive, informative and creative.

"Appreciate someone that on social media we are not the only ones who will be offended by the content displayed, so before uploading we have to think about whether this will not harm other people." (Informant 18)

Thus, this courtesy is a basic value that needs to be applied in communicating on social media. Politeness is an attitude of respecting people, speaking gentle words, using language that is easy to understand, not bullying or insulting others, avoiding using harsh terms or offending those who read them, being able to control emotions such as anger, hate, in interacting with others through social media.

Being Tolerant in Differences

Tolerance (tasamuh) is an attitude of tolerance, appreciating, allowing, and permitting the existence of opinions, views, beliefs, habits, behavior and so on that are different or even contradictory to that opinion. A tolerant person means a person who can accept other people who are different, whatever the differences are with themselves (Izzan, 2017). Tolerance is not only needed in religious attitudes but also in using social media. Expressing a different opinion on social media will not cause hostility or conflict because there is a sense of tolerance and respect for other users.

Tolerance needs to be instilled in social media users to maintain harmony amidst differences. In instilling tolerance, several attitudes need to be carried out, such as: carrying out harmonious interactions, instilling an attitude of brotherhood, caring, and like to cooperate. With an attitude of tolerance, it can prevent discriminatory actions and overcome conflicts in society (Hasibuan, 2021). The value of tolerance is needed in cultural diversity and the complexity of society. Social media users come from various educational, cultural and religious backgrounds, so tolerance is needed in understanding and accepting differences for mutual respect which creates togetherness and synergy in society.

"Tolerance is needed because social media users have diversity. From young to old, from white to dark, from different religions to tribes and languages. The freedom in question is freedom of expression based on facts and the rule of law." (Informant 17)

"Freedom, it means that we are free to express what we want to convey, but not violate existing norms." (Informant 9)

The meaning of tolerance in the use of social media refers to being open, voluntary, giving support and appreciation for the opinions of others. The existence of an attitude of mutual understanding, respect, respect in the midst of freedom of expression on social media will give birth to harmony in society.

"In my opinion, the most important values applied in the use of social media are being wise in receiving and giving messages, whether statements or questions. This value is important because by wisely using social media, everyone can have opinions and exchange ideas or ideas without having to bring down the others." (Informant 19)

"Practical values, namely tolerance/mutual respect, are very important because these are values that must be wisely applied, especially in communication. Freedom, meaning that we are free to express what we want to say, but not violate existing norms." (Informant 12)

Tolerance has a broad meaning. Tolerance is communication and freedom of thought, conscience and belief, harmony in diversity, policies that create mutual understanding between people, through conflict-free peaceful relations (Pitaloka, et al, 2021). Tolerance is formed early in the family through character education provided by parents and teachers (Rahmawati and Hermanto, 2020). This tolerance is expected to become an ethical value that is applied by students,

youth or teenagers in social interactions, in religious life, in the world of education, as well as in communicating with fellow users on social media.

"Very important values are polite and responsible. The reason is because these two values can prevent us from problems that make us lose, we must be responsible for everything that is posted." (Informant 20)

Respect for other people and the use of polite language is very necessary in interacting in cyberspace. Students as intellectuals and understand technology are required to prioritize ethics so that the activities carried out benefit others. This social-media ethic has actually been mentioned in several regulations and has become a general agreement as stipulated in the Electronic Information and Transaction Law (UU ITE). When communicating in the real world, ethics is always a guideline and general truth values. Likewise, in activities on social media, you should use good and correct language so as not to cause misunderstandings among users.

Based on the research results, four ethics were found that students need to apply when exchanging messages on social media to create various positive benefits between users. These four values are the basic ethics of social media that need to be applied by everyone, including teenagers and the younger generation.

The importance of applying these ethical values according to the informant is because: users want to feel comfortable on social media; the messages conveyed can be more useful; users can be more productive; able to protect the feelings and honor of others; prioritizing truth values according to facts and law; and can avoid problems that harm themselves and others. The ethical values can direct and positively shape the character of social media to convey information, education, entertainment, social control, as well as economic and cultural means in a correct and beneficial manner according to the needs of the digital era.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the ethics applied by students of FDK at UIN Alauddin Makassar and the Department of Biology FMIPA UNM in using social media are: (1) being honest in conveying messages; (2) being responsible in words and actions; (3) being polite to others; and (4) being tolerance in differences. Additionally, there are other values according to the informants such as discipline, time management, adhering to Islamic values, and strong faith, but only the four dominant ethics mentioned by the informants are discussed.

The importance of applying ethics in sharing messages on social media because people want to respect ethnic, religious, racial and intergroup diversity; be more productive; and avoid problems that harm yourself and others. To improve the quality of using social media, students as a large group of social media users need to apply ethics based on Indonesian culture, Islamic values. In addition, nitizens and social media users also should avoid spreading negative messages and information.

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