How Emerging Adults Present Themselves on Social Media: Online Self-Presentation Influenced by Self-Esteem, Narcissistic Personality, and Online Privacy

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ABSTRAK

Media sosial menjadi platform yang mendukung aktivitas *online self-presentation* individu, terutama pengguna usia *emerging adulthood*. Usia *emerging adulthood* adalah fase peralihan dimana identitas diri individu sedang dipertanyakan, banyak dari pengguna pada usia tersebut tidak dapat membentuk *online self-presentation* mereka sebagaimana mestinya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengatahui bagaimana *self-esteem*, kepribadian *narcissistic*, dan *privacy online* dapat mempengaruhi *online self-presentation* pada usia *emerging adulthood*. Partisipan pada penelitian ini adalah 281 pengguna aktif Instagram dan berada pada rentang usia *emerging adulthood* yaitu 18-25 tahun. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner online. Teknik analisis data menggunakan regresi hirarkis. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa *self-esteem* dan kepribadian *narcissistic* secara bersama-sama mempengaruhi *online self-presentation*, dan pengaruh lebih kuat didapatkan ketika dimasukkan *privacy online* ke dalam analisis. Kepribadian *narcissistic* menjadi variabel yang paling kuat mempengaruhi *online self-presentation* individu usia *emerging adulthood*. Partisipan wanita memiliki tingkat kepribadian *narcissistic* yang lebih tinggi dari partisipan pria.

ABSTRACT

Social media is a platform that supports individual online self-presentation activities, especially for users in emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood is a transitional phase where individual self-identity is being questioned. Many users at that age cannot make their online self-presentation as they should. This research aimed to find out how self-esteem, narcissistic personality, and online privacy can influence the online self-presentation of individuals in emerging adulthood. Participants in this research were 281 active Instagram users and were in the emerging adulthood age range, namely 18-25 years. The data analysis technique used hierarchical regression. The results show that self-esteem and narcissistic personality simultaneously influence online self-presentation, and a stronger influence is found when online privacy is included in the analysis. Narcissistic personality is the variable that most strongly influences online self-presentation of individuals in emerging adulthood. Female participants have a higher level of narcissistic personality than male participants.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a part of the daily life of individuals in emerging adulthood. This is proved by data on social media users in Indonesia, where the age group that uses social media the most is those in the emerging adulthood range (We Are Social, 2022). Emerging adulthood is the age between 18-25 years, which is a transitional phase from adolescence to adulthood (Arnett, 2018). At this age, individuals become independent and want to try many things. According to Arnett (2018), emerging adulthood usually has characteristics such as individual instability, focus on life, being in a transitional period - individuals are no longer adolescents but feel they have not yet reached adulthood, optimism about many possibilities, and the search for self-identity.

Social media can be a medium to show "who I am" to many people. Therefore, each individual will manage self-impression on social media. The way to control people's perceptions and interpretations of self is called online self-presentation (Atrill, 2015). Online self-presentation is a new form of self-presentation involving the internet and technological advances. Online self-presentation can be explained using the

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impression management theory by Goffman (1959). This theory takes a dramaturgical perspective which likens life to a show, where an individual becomes an actor who plays his/her role. Social media, based on impression management theory, is described as a front stage, which is a situation that requires an actor to play his role consistently. Individuals can present themselves according to the self-presentation they want. Conversely, the real world is described as the backstage, where the impression initially shown is released in this situation, and an individual will be the real self (Goffman, 1959).

Through online self-presentation, people can manage their self-perception with the content they share and through the displayed profile. They can present an ideal self that is similar to their real-life self or completely different. This can be one of the negative impacts of making online self-presentations, namely when false self is formed. The false self is a self-display that is not like the real self. False self, according to Skogen, Hjetlan, Bøe, Hella and Knudsen (2021), can have a negative impact on health with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and high level of stress.

False self can be reflected from the level of individual self-esteem. Self-esteem is an evaluation of oneself that includes high to low levels (high-low self-esteem) (Sharma, 2008). This level is related to online self-presentation (Grieve, March & Watkinson, 2020), where an individual with low self-esteem will tend to display false self. Conversely, a high level of self-esteem will make people present themselves closer to their true selves in the real world (authentic self) (Rui & Stefanone, 2013).

A person's level of self-esteem can be influenced by various factors, such as genetics and parenting (Mruk, 2013). In addition to these factors, the environment also influences a person's self-esteem, like a feeling of wanting to be accepted and appreciated by others (Hall, 2011), to get social support from others (Kraus, 1987), and to gain in popularity (Zabala, Diaz, Fernández & Núńez, 2020). The popularity of individuals in emerging adulthood can be obtained through social media. The indicator often used to determine popularity on social media is usually seen from the number of followers. Therefore, to increase the number of followers, people will try to display attractive online self-presentations and post content more frequently. Social media users in emerging adulthood can post statuses twice a day and interact more actively with friends on social media (Michikiyan, Dennis & Subrahmanyam, 2014). In addition, they also often add tags (#) to their posts which aim to attract lots of responses from other people in the form of likes and comments (Longobardi, Settani, Fabris & Marengo, 2020).

Social media can make people want always to present themselves and be seen by others. This desire can be caused by a person's narcissistic personality. A narcissistic personality, according to Freud (Campbell & Miller, 2011), is an individual who prioritizes focus on himself. They also admire themselves excessively, so they are described by Jones (in Herman, Brunell & Foster, 2018) as "A God complex" character. The narcissistic personality is divided into two types, namely grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism. Grandiose narcissists are described as sociable and adaptable individuals, while vulnerable narcissists are the opposite, individuals who are unrealistic and have difficulty to mingle with their social life (Jones in Ronningstam, 2005).

Even though there are these two types, in this research, the focus of narcissistic personality is only on grandiose narcissism, so the aspects measured are related to grandiose and exhibitionism. Grandiose narcissism is formed from an extraversion personality characterized by a firm personality, likes to do activities, and seeks happiness. On the other hand, the grandiose narcissist is also a manipulative and selfish personality (Campbell & Miller, 2011), where they need external affirmation of themselves and try to control others to achieve that goal (Weiner & Craighead, 2010). Meanwhile, exhibitionism is characterized by an arrogant personality, where they often show off what they have and are not ashamed of it (Behrendt, 2015).

Showing off something that is personal is what we often find on social media. However, this action does not mean it has no risks at all. Sharing content in the form of personal information will raise threats to our online privacy on social media. Online privacy means keeping personal information such as addresses, phone numbers and even personal names on the internet including social media (Marzolf, 2013). The risks that can happen if individuals do not protect their privacy on social media include causing personal data leakage, associating themselves with something harmful due to the tag feature on social media, and making it easier for other people to track their addresses or location (Acquisti, 2008).

There is an interesting finding in a previous research that tested online privacy with online self-presentation. McCullagh (2008), who examined the relationship between privacy and online self-presentation to Bloggers around the world, found that even though they knew the risks of sharing personal information, they put it aside because they wanted to express themselves. The previous research finding shows that the online self-presentation phenomenon today greatly influences individuals' decisions to take risks against the threats they can get on social media. It shows that online self-presentation on social media can not only have negative impacts related to mental health, but more than that, online self-presentation can put users in a state of danger because their personal data can be exploited by irresponsible people.

Based on these reasons, research related to online self-presentation is a matter that needs to be conducted by knowing what variables can influence it. In particular, it is necessary to research online self-presentation of individuals in emerging adulthood because, at that age, individuals are in a transitional phase where identity is often questioned. Predictor variables can come from internal variables, such as self-esteem and narcissistic personality, and from an external variable that is given a touch of technology, namely online privacy. Therefore, this research will examine whether there is an influence of self-esteem, narcissistic personality, and online privacy simultaneously on online self-presentation.

2. METHOD

This research involved 281 participants in emerging adulthood, consisting of 203 women (72.2%) and 78 men (27.8%). Most participants were students pursuing their undergraduate education (92%), and the rest were private employees, teachers, entrepreneurs, and freelancers. This research used an online questionnaire to get participants. The online questionnaire contains informed consent, participant demographic data and the scale used for each variable. The questionnaire was presented in Indonesian. This research used a quantitative approach with hierarchical regression data analysis techniques.

Online self-presentation was measured using an adaptation of the POSSA (Presentation Of Online Self Scale Adult) scale from Strimbu, O'Connel, Nearchou and 'O'Sè (2021) as shown in Table 1. This scale consists of three aspects, namely adaptable-self, authentic-self, and freedom of self-online, with 17 item statements. An example of the item statements on this scale is "Being online allows me to create a new identity" where the response category is given a value of 1-5, namely from "Never" to "Very Often". All items have high discriminating power values, so all of them are included in the next calculation. The reliability of this scale is 0.85 ($\alpha = 0.85$).

Table 1. Scale of POSSA (Presentation Of Online Self Scale Adult)

No	Aspect	Statements
1		I very often act out different personas in certain online spaces
2		I regularly use different personas online
3	Adaptable-Self	I enjoy acting out different identities online
4		Being online allows me to create a new identity
5		I am a different person depending on which online space I'm in
6		I can escape from myself online
7		I feel I am the same person in the cyber world that I am in the real world
8	Authentic-Self	I am always my true self online
9		I can't really be myself online*
10		The way I present myself online differs significantly from real life*
11		I find it easier to communicate in face-to-face contexts*
12		I find it difficult to be myself in the real world
13	Freedom of Self-Online	I prefer being online than offline
14		I can show my best qualities online
15		Communicating online allows me to say the things I can't say offline
16		I feel I can be my ideal-self online
17		I can talk to people who wouldn't usually talk to me in the real world

Note: * = Unfavorable Item Scale

Self-esteem was measured by the RSES measuring instrument (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale), adapted from Rosenberg (1965) as shown in Table 2. This measuring instrument is unidimensional with 10 item statements. An example of the item statements is "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" with response categories 1-5, namely "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." There are nine items which have good discriminating power with a reliability of 0.81 ($\alpha = 0.81$).

Table 2. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

No	Aspect	Statements
1		On the whole, I am satisfied with myself
2		At times I think I am no good at all*
3		I feel that I have a number of good qualities
4		I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5	Self-Esteem	I feel I do not have much to be proud of*
6		I certainly feel useless at times*
7		I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
8		I wish I could have more respect for myself*
9		All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure*
10		I take a positive attitude toward myself

Note: * = Unfavorable Item Scale

The narcissistic personality was measured using the NPI-13 (Narcissistic Personality Inventory) adapted from Piotrowska, Piotrowski, Rogoza, Baran, Hitoko & Maltby (2018) as shown in Table 3. This research only took the grandiose/exhibitionism aspect based on the consideration that this aspect describes online self-presentation more than other aspects such as leadership/authority and exploitativeness/entitlement. The grandiose/exhibitionism aspect consists of 5 statement items, one of which is "I like to upload my photos on social media," with response categories 1-5, namely "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The reliability of this scale is 0.61 ($\alpha = 0.61$).

Table 3. Scale of Narcissistic Personality Inventory

No	Aspect	Statements
1		I know that I am a good person because everybody keeps telling me so
2	Grandiose/	I know that I am a good person because everybody keeps telling me so
3	Exhibitionism	I like to look at my body
4		I will usually show off if I get the chance
5		I like to look at myself in the mirror

Online privacy was measured using SNS Collective Privacy Concern (SNSCPC), adapted from Jiang, Heng, and Choi (2013). The measurement scale consists of three aspects: collective information diffusion, collective information access, and collective information control, with response categories 1-5, namely "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." An example of the item statements is, "It usually bothers me when I do not have control over who can get access to my personal information on social networking sites." It consists of nine items with good discriminating power and a reliability of 0.89 ($\alpha = 0.89$).

Table 4. Scale of SNS Collective Privacy Concern (SNSCPC)

No	Aspect	Statements
1		It usually bothers me when I do not have control over who can get access to my personal information on social networking sites.
2	Control	It usually bothers me when I do not have control over which part of my personal information is displayed on social networking sites.
3		It usually bothers me when I do not have control over decisions about how my personal information is used and shared by others.
4		I am concerned that my control over my personal information is reduced as a result of oversharing by others.
5	Access	I am concerned that as a result of my using social networking sites, others might know more about me than I am comfortable with.

6		I am concerned that as a result of my using social networking sites, information about me that I consider private is now more readily available to others than I would want.
7		I am concerned that as a result of my using social networking sites, information about me is out there that, if used, could invade my privacy
8		It bothers me that social networking sites show everyone a history of me from the past till now
9		I am concerned other people might see what I post on social networking sites when I do not intend to.
10		I am concerned that what I share with a small group of friends on social networking sites might be seen by others without my knowledge.
11	Diffusion	I am concerned that other people might use what I post on social networking sites for other purposes without notifying me or getting my permission.
12		I am concerned that other people might share what I post on social networking sites with people outside of my networks without getting my permission.

Participants were given the freedom to fill in this online questionnaire. After reading the preface, participants could decide whether they wanted to continue to fill out the questionnaire or not be involved in the research.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Descriptive data is presented first to provide a general description of the research respondents. Descriptive data contains data regarding respondents' use of Instagram.
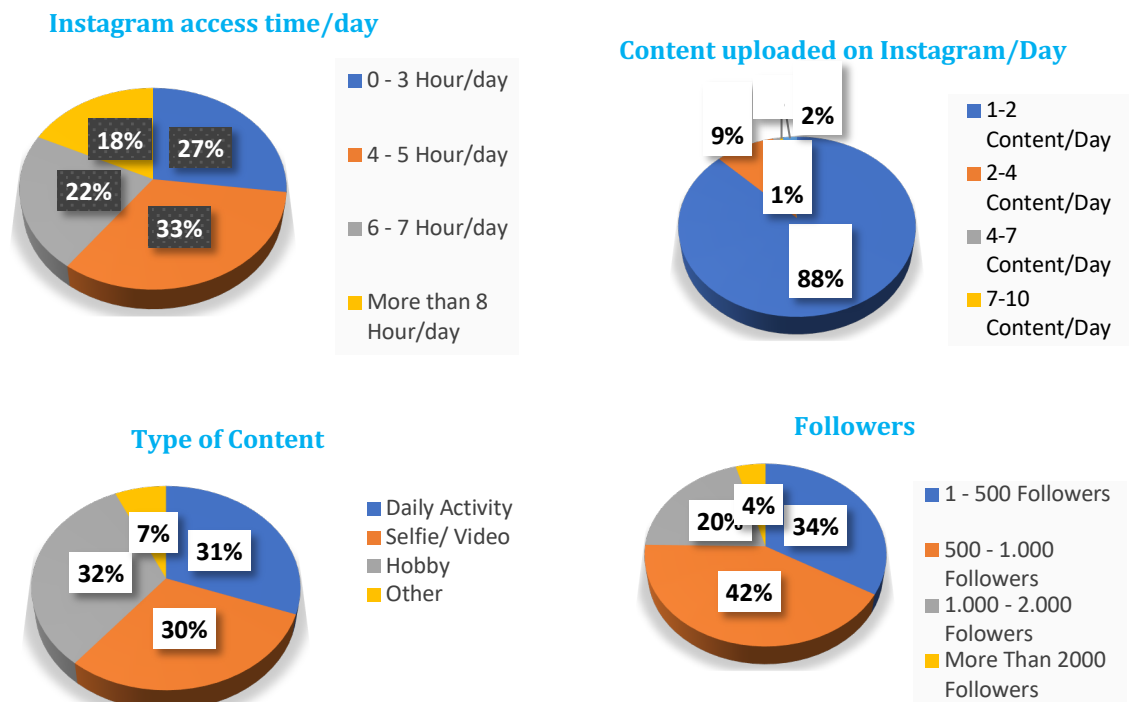

Figure 1. Demographic information

Based on Figure 1 above, it can be seen that respondents in this study access Instagram social media every day. Respondents access Instagram most widely 4 - 5 hours/day and upload 1-2 content every day. The type of content that many respondents share is their hobbies, but respondents also share a lot of content about their daily activities as well as selfies or videos. This shows that respondents share a lot of things about their daily lives on Instagram. Meanwhile, the number of followers was also collected by researchers

in relation to the narcissistic variable, namely someone who shares content on social media with the aim of getting a response from their followers on Instagram. Based on the data, the highest number of followers of respondents is 500 -1000 followers, this number shows that the number of followers of respondents is quite large.

Based on the results of the research shown in Table 5, it was found that online self-presentation has correlation with all dependent variables. The correlation can be seen in table 1. Self-esteem is the variable that has a very strong correlation with a negative relationship, meaning that when self-esteem is higher, online self-presentation is lower. Narcissistic personality has a fairly strong correlation, and conversely, online privacy has a weak correlation with online self-presentation.

Table 5. Correlation Coefficient Test Results

	1	2	3	4
Online Self-Presentation				
Self-esteem	-0,98**			
Narcissistic Personality	0,282**	0,287**		
Online Privacy	0,177**	-0,106	0,136	
Mean	32,21	30,5	16,57	48,27
SD	9,61	5,37	3,22	7,44

Notes: 1= Online Self-Presentation, 2 - self-esteem,

3 = Narcissistic personality, 4 = Online privacy, **= P < 0,01

Meanwhile, based on the results of the hierarchical regression test in model 1 as shown in Table 6, where the variables of self-esteem and narcissistic personality were included in the calculation, the results show a significant influence. Furthermore, in model 2, the inclusion of the online privacy variable strengthens the influence on online self-presentation. Therefore, all independent variables significantly influence online self-presentation.

Table 6. Hierarchical Regression of All Independent Variables

Variables	B	T	R	R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF
Model 1			0,338	0,114	0,114	17,925
Self-Esteem	-0,195	-3,311				
Narcissistic Personality	0,338	5,729				
Model 2			0,356	0,127	0,13	4,06
Self-Esteem	-0,177	-2,983				
Narcissistic Personality	0,317	5,319				
Online Privacy	0,116	2,015				

Note: P = <0,05

Discussion

Every individual has a different level of self-esteem. The level of self-esteem is categorized into two levels: low self-esteem and high self-esteem. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to seek recognition on social media through their activities, either by posting photos and videos or giving responses in the form of likes or comments on other people's content (Yang, Holden, & Carter, 2017). Individuals with a low level of self-esteem also tend to present an unreal self or known as a false self (Mehdizahdeh, 2010). This false self has negative effects on the individuals, such as affecting mental health and even causing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and high-stress levels (Skogen, Hjetland, BØe, Hella & Knudsen, 2021).

The level of self-esteem can be influenced by individual internal and external factors. Factors related to parents, such as genetic predisposition and parenting, can influence how self-esteem can be formed in individuals. In addition to these factors, environmental factors also contribute to a person's self-esteem. These external factors can encourage individuals to increase their self-esteem through social media. Individuals make online self-presentations, among others, driven by a sense of wanting to be accepted and wanting to get social support. This can be realized from responses in the form of likes and positive

comments that they can get from followers on social media. In addition, the desire to be popular can also cause social media to become a place for them to increase their self-esteem. They can achieve this popularity by creating content that is shared through their social media accounts. The number of responses they get can determine the level of popularity. Besides that, the number of followers can also indicate a person's popularity. This is in line with the idea stated by Zabala, Diaz, Fernández, and Núńez (2020) that popularity achieved to increase one's self-esteem refers to prestige, attention from many people, and dominance in a group.

In model 1, in addition to the self-esteem factor, it is also found that narcissistic personality simultaneously influences individual online self-presentation in emerging adulthood. The results even show that narcissistic personality has the greatest influence on online self-presentation. Campbell and Miller (2011) stated that narcissistic personality is a personality that prioritizes self and always wants to attract the attention of other people. This is in line with the aspects of narcissistic personality that were measured in the participants, namely grandiose narcissism. Individuals with grandiose narcissism always need external affirmation of themselves because they need attention from others (Weiner & Craighead, 2010). Attempts to attract the attention of others can be realized through online self-presentations on social media. Individuals with narcissistic personalities will touch up their profile pictures in such a way as to appear physically attractive. This shows that there is a positive illusion of their appearance on social media (Ong, Ang, Ho, Lim, Goh, Lee, & Chua, 2011). The exhibitionism aspect, which was also measured in participants, can strengthen the result of the previous research that individuals with narcissistic personalities will be happy to show themselves off on social media (Behrendt, 2015).

In addition to the internal factors, the results of this research also show that an external factor, namely online privacy, also significantly influences online self-presentation. This research finding contrasts the result of the previous research, which said that online privacy does not have a significant effect on online self-presentation. Individuals already know that online privacy is important to protect, but in fact, the application of online privacy is not implemented. Individuals prefer to pursue popularity rather than to protect of their data on social media (McCullagh, 2008). On the contrary, the finding of this research is in line with the result of research by Krämer and Haferkamp (2011), namely that one's online privacy can be a potential obstacle that will affect online self-presentation on social media. Knowledge of online privacy will determine how individuals display their self-impression on social media because this will impact them in real life (Yeh, Wang, Lin, Tseng, Shih, & Lai, 2017).

When observed from participants with gender differences, there are interesting findings on narcissistic personality. Female participants have a higher level of narcissistic personality than male participants in influencing their online self-presentation. Female participants prefer to look at themselves in the mirror and examine their bodies. Male participants are also happy to look at themselves in the mirror and upload their photos on social media. This finding is supported by the research of Mehdizahdeh (2010), where women have a higher tendency for online self-presentation by displaying photos of their physical appearance on social media. Female social media users are also found to share more content in the form of selfie photos on their social media (Arpaci, Yalcin, Baloğlu, & Kesici, 2018).

Male participants have a higher self-esteem level than female participants in influencing their online self-presentation on social media. Male and female participants score high on their expectations of self-esteem. This shows that the participants are trying to increase their self-esteem through online self-presentations on social media. In addition, male participants feel more confident that they can do as well as other people. This shows that their online self-presentation on social media aims to prove they have the same value as others.

In terms of online privacy, male participants have a higher level of awareness than women. Male participants focus more on access control over their information on social media which may be accessed by others without their permission. Meanwhile, female participants focus more on access diffusion, which is the concern that the content they share could be spread back by others without them knowing. Therefore, concerns over the dissemination of their personal data can become control over online self-presentation activities, namely being careful about what they share on social media.

In line with impression management theory, it is explained that individual impression management is influenced by internal and external factors. Individuals can play a certain role on their front stage, such as online self-presentation on social media. Individuals can display authentic self (self-impression close to themselves in the real world) or even false self (self-impression completely different from themselves in the real world). The impression displayed can be influenced by the level of self-esteem, where individuals with high self-esteem tend to display their authentic selves and vice versa. In addition, the narcissistic personality will encourage expression to create impressions on individuals. Individual expressions can vary according to the online self-presentation strategy they choose. Meanwhile, external factors in the form of online privacy can be explained by impression management theory, namely that the boundary set by

individuals will be in line with their self-awareness, self-monitoring, and self-disclosure. Individuals have their standards for deciding what information to share on social media and what personal information not to share.

Online self-presentation is not only about how much and often someone shares content on their social media. More than that, online self-presentation activities need to be balanced with healthy internal factors and well-managed external factors. Individuals need to pay attention to their self-esteem in the real world so they do not have to seek recognition in cyberspace. Individuals must also control their narcissistic personalities in cyberspace to protect online privacy boundary. This online privacy boundary needs to be set in online self-presentation activities for security reasons for social media users.

4. CONCLUSION

Online self-presentation of individuals in emerging adulthood can be explained through the internal factors, namely self-esteem and narcissistic personality, as well the external factor, namely online privacy. The self-esteem of individuals in emerging adulthood needs to be increased through parental and social support in the real life so that individuals do not seek excessive recognition through online self-presentation on social media. Narcissistic personality, the most influencing factor for online self-presentation, also needs to be restrained so that individuals can be wise in deciding the intensity and quantity of content they share on social media. Online privacy also needs to be further improved so that the boundary of personal information that need to be protected are not only used as a discourse but can also be set and used as guidelines by individuals regarding their online self-presentation on social media.

The findings of this research can be used as a reference for developing materials used in government outreach to increase awareness of individuals in emerging adulthood towards proper and safe online self-presentation activities. The government can develop social media literacy programs through seminars or workshops so that individuals in emerging adulthood can be smarter in using their social media.

This research has limitations. Future research is expected to use a different approach, namely the SEM analysis technique (structural equation model), to further explore latent variables, both exogenous latent variables and endogenous latent variables that can influence online self-presentation.

5. ACKNOWLEDGE

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