The Role of Social Media in Enhancing Youth Soft Skills for Diplomatic Literacy: A Campus Case Study

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Abstract. Social media has emerged as a transformative platform for youth skill development, particularly in diplomatic literacy. This qualitative study investigates how university students leverage social media to enhance their soft skills, focusing on communication, critical thinking, and cultural sensitivity. Through interviews and focus group discussions with 30 university students, the research explores the mechanisms by which digital platforms facilitate skill development. Findings reveal that social media provides unique opportunities for global interaction, information evaluation, and cross-cultural understanding. Students reported significant improvements in communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and cultural awareness through engaged social media use.

Keywords:diplomatic politics, literacy, digital communication, social media, soft skills, youth

Abstrak. Media sosial telah muncul sebagai platform transformatif untuk pengembangan keterampilan generasi muda, khususnya dalam literasi diplomatik. Studi kualitatif ini menyelidiki bagaimana mahasiswa universitas memanfaatkan media sosial untuk meningkatkan soft skills mereka, dengan fokus pada komunikasi, berpikir kritis, dan sensitivitas budaya. Melalui wawancara dan diskusi kelompok terfokus dengan 30 mahasiswa universitas, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi mekanisme di mana platform digital memfasilitasi pengembangan keterampilan. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa media sosial memberikan peluang unik untuk interaksi global, evaluasi informasi, dan pemahaman lintas budaya. Mahasiswa melaporkan peningkatan signifikan dalam keterampilan komunikasi, kemampuan berpikir kritis, dan kesadaran budaya melalui penggunaan media sosial yang aktif.

Kata kunci: Politik Diplomatik , Literasi , Komunikasi Digital, Media Sosial , Keterampilan Lunak (Soft Skills) , Generasi Muda .

1. BACKGROUND

In the contemporary digital landscape, social media has emerged as a significant facilitator of communication and interaction, particularly among youth. The ability to navigate these platforms effectively is increasingly recognized as a crucial component of soft skills development, which encompasses communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills essential for diplomatic engagement (Solmaz, 2017; Ochieng & Ngware, 2021). This study investigates how social media can enhance these soft skills, thereby contributing to diplomatic literacy among students.

The digital revolution has created unprecedented opportunities for global connectivity, making the ability to navigate these platforms not just a technological skill, but a critical component of modern communication competence. The significance of social media extends beyond mere information sharing; it has become a crucial arena for developing essential soft

skills that are increasingly vital in our interconnected world. As noted by Ochieng & Ngware (2021), soft skills encompass a range of interpersonal attributes that enable effective and harmonious interactions. In the context of diplomatic engagement, these skills are particularly crucial, involving communication, collaboration, and critical thinking (Manor & Segev, 2020).

Recent scholarly research highlights the potential of social media as a dynamic learning environment. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook are no longer just communication tools but have evolved into sophisticated spaces for skill development and cross-cultural understanding (Ameir, 2021). These digital platforms provide unique opportunities for youth to practice and refine skills that are essential in diplomatic and professional contexts.

The growing recognition of social media's educational potential has prompted academic interest in understanding how these platforms can be leveraged for soft skills development. Latif (2023) emphasizes the importance of media literacy in navigating these digital spaces, suggesting that effective engagement requires not just technological proficiency, but also critical evaluation and responsible interaction.

This study aims to investigate how social media contributes to the enhancement of soft skills among university students, with a specific focus on diplomatic literacy. By examining students' experiences and perceptions, we seek to understand the mechanisms through which digital platforms facilitate skill development and contribute to more effective communication and cultural understanding.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Concept of Literacy

According to UNESCO (as cited in Purwati, 2017), literacy is the tangible manifestation of cognitive skills, specifically reading and writing, regardless of the context in which these skills were acquired, from whom, or how. Factors such as academic research, institutions, national contexts, cultural values, and personal experiences can influence an individual's understanding of literacy (Purwati, 2017).

Literacy can be interpreted as literacy, the ability to read and write, or fluency in reading and writing. Based on its context, literacy is an integration of writing, reading, and critical thinking skills (Purwati, 2017).

Gee, as cited in Au (and further in Chairunnisa, 2018), who views literacy from a discourse perspective, states that literacy is "mastery of, or fluent control over, a secondary discourse." Gee explains that literacy is a skill acquired through thinking, reading, writing, and speaking (Chairunnisa, 2018).

Soft Skills and Diplomatic Literacy

Soft skills are defined as interpersonal attributes that enable individuals to interact effectively and harmoniously with others. The theory of soft skills posits that these competencies are vital for professional success and personal development (Ochieng & Ngware, 2021). In the context of diplomacy, soft skills facilitate negotiation, conflict resolution, and cultural sensitivity, which are essential for effective diplomatic engagement (Manor & Segev, 2020; Grincheva, 2015). Social media platforms provide a unique environment for practicing these skills, as they encourage interaction across diverse cultural and social backgrounds (Solmaz, 2017; Latif, 2023). Grincheva (2015) further elaborates on the importance of these skills, noting that diplomatic literacy is not simply about transmitting information, but about creating meaningful cross-cultural understanding and dialogue.

Social Media as a Soft Skills Incubator

The emergence of social media platforms has created unprecedented opportunities for soft skills development. Solmaz (2017) argues that these digital spaces provide a unique environment for practicing and refining interpersonal skills, particularly for youth. The key characteristics that make social media an effective soft skills development platform include:

- Immediate and Global Communication
- Diverse Cultural Interactions
- Opportunities for Critical Thinking
- Platform for Collaborative Engagement

Latif (2023) emphasizes that social media is not just a communication tool, but a complex ecosystem that demands sophisticated media literacy skills. This literacy involves:

- Critical Information Evaluation
- Understanding Digital Etiquette
- Responsible Online Interaction
- Navigating Complex Information Landscapes

Theoretical Intersection of Diplomacy and Digital Platforms

The theoretical framework of this study recognizes social media as more than a technological platform. It is a dynamic social space that mirrors and shapes diplomatic interactions. As noted by Ameir (2021), platforms like Twitter have become instrumental in diplomatic communication, allowing for real-time global dialogue and image portrayal.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical approach adopted in this study suggests that soft skills are:

- Dynamically Developed
- Context-Dependent
- Continuously Evolving
- Critically Important in a Globalized World

3. METHODOLOGY

A. *Research Method*

A qualitative research methodology was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with 30 university students. The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of students' experiences and perceptions of social media's role in developing soft skills related to diplomatic literacy.

B. *Research Design*

The research design followed a phenomenological approach, focusing on understanding participants' lived experiences with social media. The study was conducted in the following stages:

Approach: Qualitative phenomenological study

Participants: 30 university students

Sampling: Purposive sampling

Data Collection Methods:

1. Google Form interviews
2. Focus group discussions
3. Thematic data analysis

Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent obtained
- Participant anonymity ensured
- Voluntary participation emphasized

4.   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
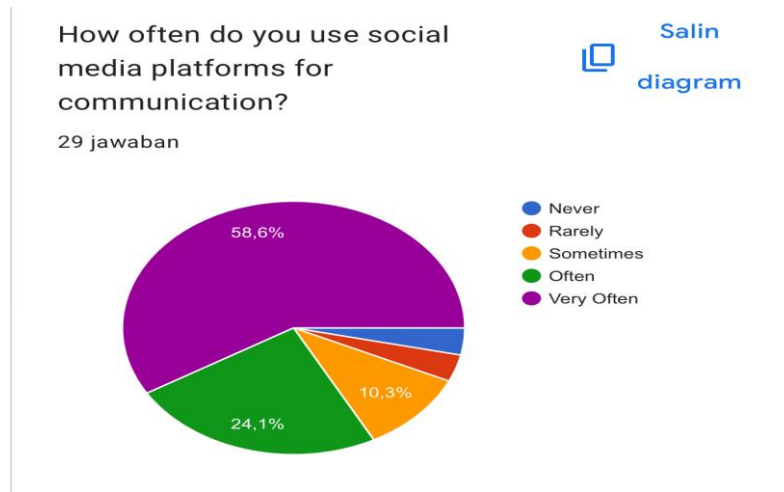
1.   Social Media and Communication Skills

Figure 1. This diagram presents the survey results.

The diagram presents the results of a survey asking, "How often do you use social media platforms for communication?" with 29 responses.

Most users use social media very often: A significant majority of 58.6% of respondents indicated that they use social media very often for communication.

Rare and infrequent use: A combined 10.3% of respondents reported using social media rarely or never.

Moderate use: 24.1% of respondents classified their usage as "sometimes" or "often."

The diagram suggests that social media has become a prevalent tool for communication among the surveyed individuals. The majority's frequent use highlights its integration into daily lives for connecting with others and sharing information

Figure 2. The following diagram presents the results of a survey asking

The diagram presents the results of a survey asking, "In what ways do you believe social media helps you improve your communication skills?" with 30 responses.

- Expressing ideas clearly was the most frequently cited way social media helps improve communication skills, with 20 out of 30 respondents (66.7%) mentioning it.
- Engaging in discussions with diverse perspectives was the second most common response, selected by 11 respondents (36.7%).
- Learning to articulate complex ideas was chosen by 9 respondents (30%).
- Practicing written communication was selected by 10 respondents (33.3%).
- Other (unspecified ways) were mentioned by only 2 respondents (6.7%).

The diagram suggests that social media is perceived as a valuable tool for enhancing communication skills, particularly in terms of expressing oneself clearly and engaging in discussions with diverse viewpoints.

-Can you provide a specific example of how social media has helped you develop communication skills?

(Open-text response)

30 Response

Social media offers a variety of ways to improve communication skills, according to the participants

- Exposure to Diverse Information and Viewpoints: Social media allows people to learn about new topics, encounter different perspectives, and stay updated on current events. This exposure can broaden one's understanding and improve critical thinking skills (participants 1, 5, 9, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30).
- Networking and Discussion: Social media platforms facilitate connecting with others, participating in discussions, and exchanging ideas (participants 3, 8, This can help develop communication skills through active engagement and feedback (participant19)
- Content Creation: Creating content for social media, such as posts or comments, can hone writing and communication skills (participant 8).
- Personal Branding: Building a strong online presence through social media can improve one's ability to communicate their skills and experience effectively (participant 8).

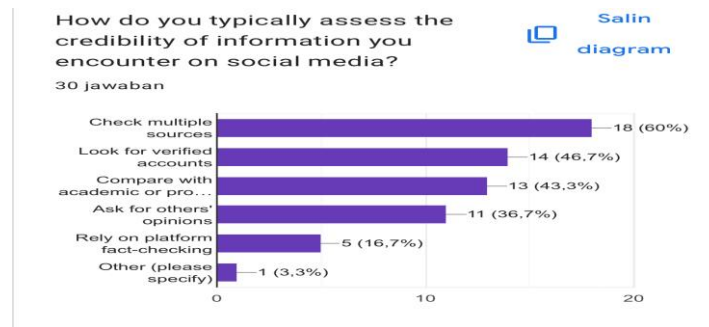## 2. Critical Thinking and Information Evaluation

Figure 3. The following diagram presents the results of a survey asking

The diagram presents the results of a survey asking, "How do you typically assess the credibility of information you encounter on social media?" with 30 responses.

- Checking multiple sources is the most common method used to assess credibility, with 18 out of 30 respondents (60%) indicating they use this approach.
- Looking for verified accounts is the second most common method, chosen by 14 respondents (46.7%).
- Comparing information with academic or professional sources is used by 13 respondents (43.3%).
- Asking for others' opinions is used by 11 respondents (36.7%).
- Relying on platform fact-checking is the least common method, with only 5 respondents (16.7%) using it.

Only 1 respondent (3.3%) mentioned using other unspecified methods.

The diagram suggests that respondents are aware of the importance of verifying information on social media and employ a variety of strategies to assess credibility. Checking multiple sources, looking for verified accounts, and comparing information with reputable sources are the most widely used methods
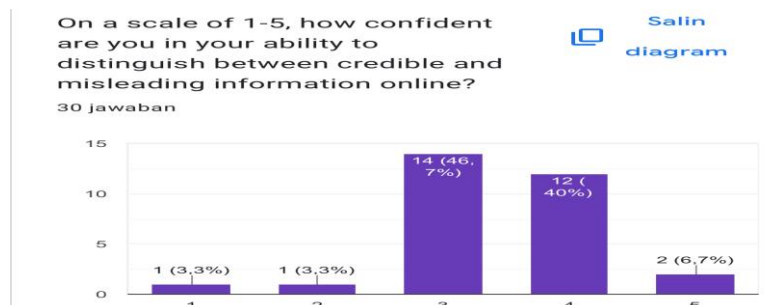

Figure 4. The following diagram presents the results of a survey that asked, On a scale of 1-5,

The diagram presents the results of a survey asking, "On a scale of 1-5, how confident are you in your ability to distinguish between credible and misleading information online?" with 30 responses.

- The majority of respondents (46.7%) expressed a moderate level of confidence (rating themselves a 3).
- A significant proportion (40%) felt fairly confident (rating themselves a 4).
- Only a small percentage expressed low confidence (1 or 2), with 6.7% rating themselves a 5 (very confident

The diagram suggests that while respondents generally have some confidence in their ability to discern credible information online, there is a range of confidence levels. A significant portion appears to be moderately confident, recognizing the need for caution and critical thinking

-Describe a situation where you critically evaluated information you found on social media.

(Open-text response)

30 response

Many participants described a similar process for evaluating information found on social media.

Check the Source: Look at who is sharing the information and their credibility. Are they a medical professional, a news organization, or someone with a vested interest in promoting a product? (Participants 2, 3, 5, 6, 13, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30)

Verify with Other Sources: Cross-check the information with established news outlets or trusted websites. (Participants 4, 7, 8, 12, 18)

Look for Evidence of Bias: Consider the language used and any potential motivations behind the information. Is it emotionally charged or trying to sell something? (Participants 7, 18)

Overall, these responses show that people are increasingly aware of the need to be critical consumers of information online.

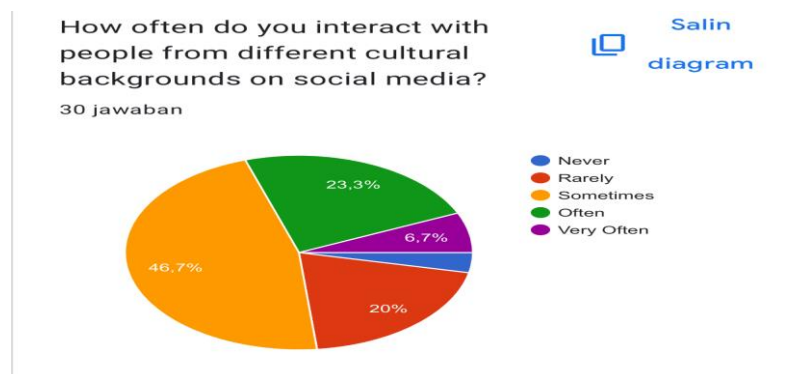3. **Cultural Awareness and Diplomatic Skills**

Figure 5. The diagram presents the results of a survey asking,

The diagram presents the results of a survey asking, "How often do you interact with people from different cultural backgrounds on social media?" with 30 responses.

● Rarely: The most common response, with 46.7% of respondents indicating they rarely interact with people from different cultural backgrounds on social media.

● Sometimes: The second most common response, with 23.3% of respondents indicating they sometimes interact.

● Often: 20% of respondents indicated they often interact.

● Very Often: 6.7% of respondents indicated they very often interact.

● Never: 6.7% of respondents indicated they never interact

The diagram suggests that while social media provides opportunities for cross-cultural interaction, a significant portion of respondents interact with people from different cultural backgrounds infrequently. This suggests that there may be room for improvement in fostering more diverse and inclusive online communities
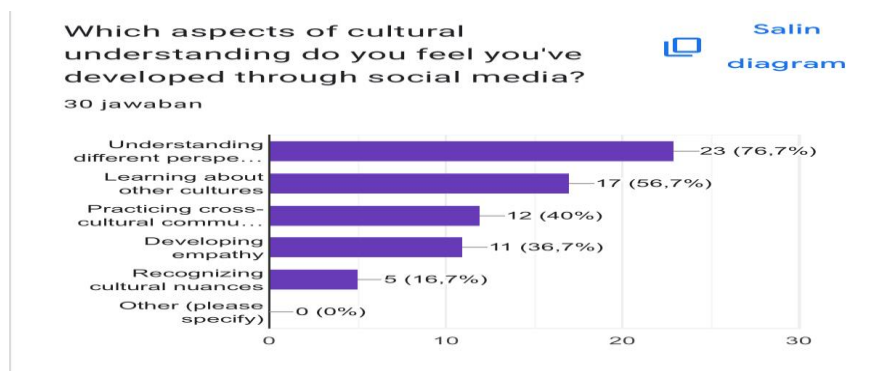

Figure 6. The diagram presents the results of a survey asking

The diagram presents the results of a survey asking, "Which aspects of cultural understanding do you feel you've developed through social media?" with 30 responses.

● Understanding different perspectives: The most frequently cited aspect of cultural understanding developed through social media, with 23 out of 30 respondents (76.7%) mentioning it.

● Learning about other cultures: The second most common response, selected by 17 respondents (56.7%).

● Practicing cross-cultural communication: Chosen by 12 respondents (40%).

● Developing empathy: Selected by 11 respondents (36.7%).

● Recognizing cultural nuances: The least common response, with only 5 respondents (16.7%) mentioning it.

● No respondents indicated "Other" (unspecified aspects

The diagram suggests that social media is perceived as a valuable tool for developing cultural understanding, particularly in terms of gaining exposure to diverse perspectives and learning about different cultures. Respondents also believe it helps in practicing cross-cultural communication and developing empathy

- **Provide an example of how social media has helped you understand a perspective different from your own.**

(Open-text response)

30 Response

Social media can be a powerful tool for encountering different viewpoints, as shown by these participants' experiences. Here are some of the ways people described learning from different perspectives:

- Exposure to Diverse Voices: Social media allows people to connect with and hear from others with different backgrounds and experiences (participants 3, 6, 8, 13, 24, 25, 29, 30).
- Understanding Complex Issues: By seeing an issue discussed from multiple angles, people can develop a more nuanced understanding (participant 3).
- Empathy Building: Social media can help users connect with the human stories behind different viewpoints, fostering empathy (participants 10, 26, 28).
- Global Awareness: Social media allows people to learn about cultures and experiences from all over the world (participants 11, 24).

4. **Media Literacy and Digital Citizenship**

- Rate your agreement with the following statements:

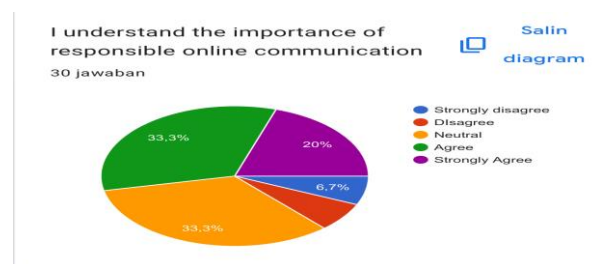(Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Neutral / Agree / Strongly Agree)

Figure 7. The diagram presents the results of a survey asking

The diagram presents the results of a survey asking, "I understand the importance of responsible online communication." with 30 responses.

- Agree: The majority of respondents, 33.3%, agree with the statement.
- Strongly Agree: Another 33.3% strongly agree, indicating a high level of awareness and understanding.

- Disagree: 20% disagree with the statement.
- Strongly Disagree: 6.7% strongly disagree.
- Neutral: 6.7% are neutral

The diagram suggests that a significant majority of respondents understand the importance of responsible online communication. However, a notable portion disagrees, indicating a need for further education or awareness campaigns on this topic
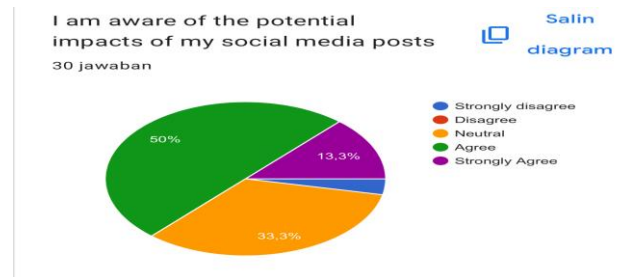

Figure 8. The diagram presents the results of a survey asking

The diagram presents the results of a survey asking, "I am aware of the potential impacts of my social media posts" with 30 responses.

- Agree: The majority of respondents, 50%, agree with the statement.
- Strongly Agree: 33.3% strongly agree, indicating a high level of awareness.
- Disagree: 13.3% disagree with the statement.
- Strongly Disagree: 3.3% strongly disagree.
- Neutral: 0% are neutral.

The diagram suggests that a significant majority of respondents are aware of the potential impacts of their social media posts. This indicates a good level of understanding regarding responsible online behavior.
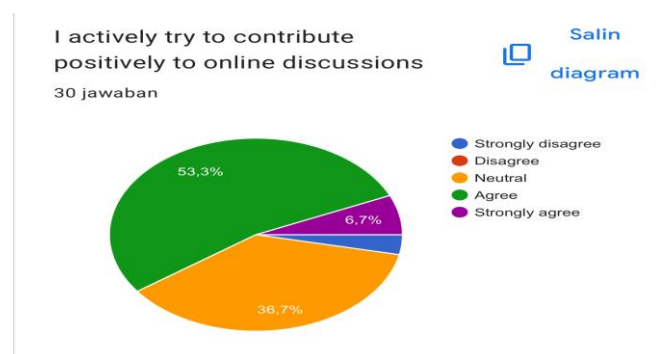

Figure 9. The diagram shows the survey responses from 30 participants on how actively

The diagram shows the survey responses from 30 participants on how actively they try to contribute positively to online discussions. The key insights from the diagram are:

1. Majority Agreement: 53.3% of the respondents strongly agree or agree that they actively try to contribute positively to online discussions.

2. Neutral Stance: 36.7% of the participants have a neutral stance on this topic.

4. Disagreement Minority: A smaller proportion, 10% of the respondents, either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.

5. Positive Contribution Focus: The diagram indicates that the majority of the participants are inclined towards positively contributing to online discussions, suggesting an awareness of the importance of responsible online engagement.

the diagram reveals that the majority of the surveyed students make an active effort to contribute positively to online discussions, while a significant portion also maintain a neutral stance on this. The data suggests an overall awareness and commitment to constructive online participation among the respondents.
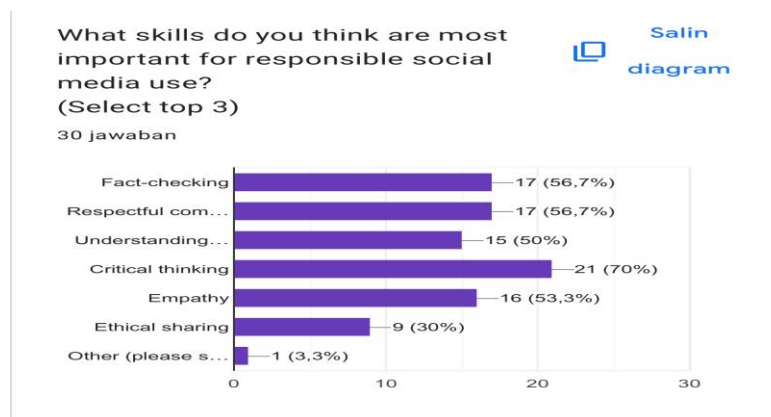

Figure 10. The diagram shows the survey responses from 30 participants on the skills

The diagram shows the survey responses from 30 participants on the skills they consider most important for responsible social media use. Here's a summary of the key insights:

1. Critical Thinking: 70% of the respondents selected critical thinking as one of the top 3 most important skills, indicating a strong emphasis on the ability to evaluate information critically.

2. Fact-Checking and Respectful Communication: Both fact-checking and respectful communication were chosen by 56.7% of the participants, highlighting the importance of verifying information and communicating in a considerate manner.

3. Understanding Diverse Perspectives: Half of the respondents (50%) selected the ability to understand diverse perspectives as a crucial skill for responsible social media use.

4. Empathy: Over half of the participants (53.3%) consider empathy to be an important skill, suggesting an awareness of the need for compassion and understanding in online interactions.

6. Ethical Sharing: While less prominent than the other skills, 30% of the respondents still recognized ethical sharing as an important aspect of responsible social media use.

the diagram reveals that the surveyed students prioritize critical thinking, fact-checking, respectful communication, and understanding diverse perspectives as the most important skills for responsible social media engagement. This emphasizes the need for a sophisticated and nuanced approach to digital interactions.

5. **Personal Development and Soft Skills**

- How do you think social media contributes to your personal and professional skill development?

(Open-text response)

30 Response

Social media can be a valuable tool for personal and professional growth, as many participants highlighted. Here are some of the key benefits mentioned:

- Exposure to Diverse Knowledge and Networks: Social media allows people to learn new things, stay updated on industry trends, and connect with professionals in their field (participants 3, 7, 9, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26).
- Content Creation and Skill Development: Creating content for social media can improve writing, communication, and other creative skills (participants 7, 19, 24, 27, 29).
- Critical Thinking and Communication: Evaluating information and engaging in discussions online can help develop critical thinking and communication skills (participants 3, 5, 6, 12, 21).
- Personal Branding: Social media platforms like LinkedIn can be used to build a professional profile and showcase expertise (participants 3, 7).
- Networking and Learning: Social media allows people to connect with mentors, peers, and experts in their field, and participate in discussions and online courses (participants 3, 18, 23).

While some responses were vague or simply stated that social media helps "a lot" (participants 14, 15, 16), the many specific examples provided illustrate the potential of social media for personal and professional development.
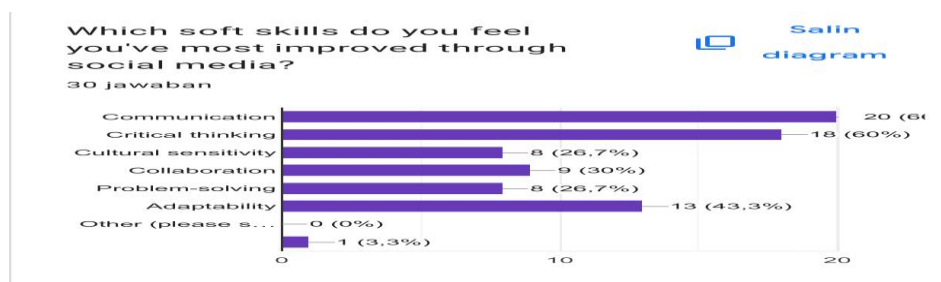

Figure 11. The diagram presents the survey responses from 30 participants on the soft skills

The diagram presents the survey responses from 30 participants on the soft skills they feel have most improved through their use of social media.

1. Communication: The most frequently selected skill, with 20 out of 30 participants (66.7%) indicating that their communication abilities have improved significantly through social media use.

2. Critical Thinking: The second most common response, with 18 out of 30 respondents (60%) recognizing improvements in their critical thinking skills.

3. Adaptability: 13 participants (43.3%) felt that their adaptability has been enhanced through social media engagement.

4. Collaboration and Problem-Solving: Both of these skills were selected by 8 participants (26.7%), suggesting a moderate improvement in these areas.

5. Cultural Sensitivity: 8 respondents (26.7%) felt that social media has helped improve their cultural sensitivity.

6. Other Skills: Only 1 participant (3.3%) selected "Other" skills, indicating that the provided options captured the most relevant soft skill improvements.

The diagram highlights that communication and critical thinking are the primary soft skills that the surveyed students have experienced the greatest development in through their use of social media. This aligns with the emphasis on these skills in the earlier question about responsible social media use.

Overall, the results suggest that social media has been an effective platform for enhancing a variety of important soft skills among the participants, with communication and critical thinking being the most prominent.
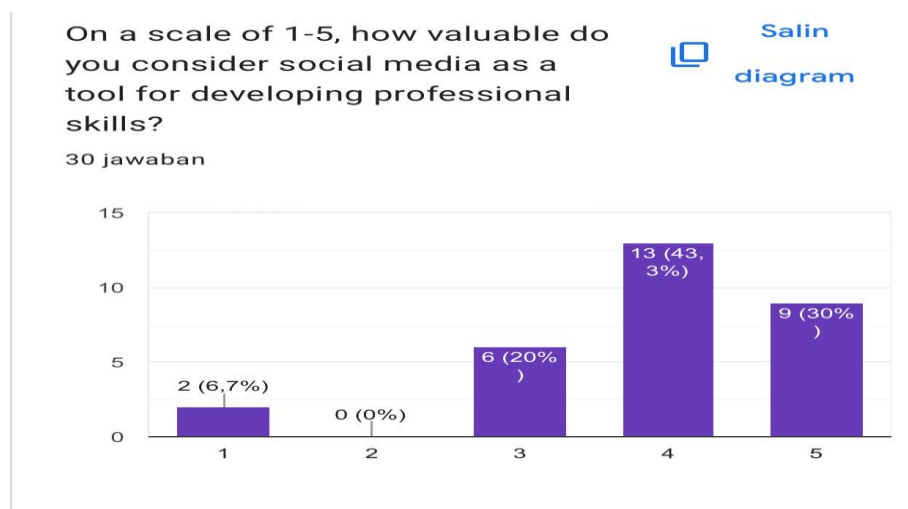

Figure 12. The diagram shows the results of a survey where respondents were asked to rate

The diagram shows the results of a survey where respondents were asked to rate, on a scale of 1-5, how valuable they consider social media as a tool for developing professional skills. The key findings from the diagram are:

1. Most respondents (43%) rated social media as a 4 out of 5 in terms of its value for developing professional skills.

2. The next largest group (30%) rated social media as a 5 out of 5 in terms of its value.

3. A smaller percentage (20%) rated social media as a 3 out of 5.

4. Only a few respondents (6.7%) rated social media as a 1 out of 5, indicating they do not find it very valuable for professional skill development.

5. No respondents (0%) rated social media as a 2 out of 5 in terms of its value.

Overall, the diagram suggests that the majority of respondents (73%) view social media as a fairly valuable or very valuable tool for developing professional skills, with only a small minority seeing it as less valuable. The results indicate that social media is considered an important resource by many for professional development purposes.

1. Communication Skills Development

- 66.7% of participants reported improved ability to express ideas clearly
- 36.7% noted enhanced engagement with diverse perspectives
- Key mechanisms:
  - Content creation
  - Networking
  - Discussion participation

2. Critical Thinking and Information Evaluation

- 60% of participants developed improved critical information assessment skills
- Primary evaluation strategies:
  - Checking multiple sources
  - Verifying account credentials
  - Comparing with academic sources

3. Cultural Awareness

- 76.7% gained understanding of different perspectives
- 56.7% learned about other cultures
- 40% practiced cross-cultural communication

4. Media Literacy and Digital Citizenship

- 70% emphasized critical thinking as crucial
- 56.7% highlighted fact-checking and respectful communication

- 53.3% recognized the importance of empathy in online interactions

The findings reveal that students recognize social media as a valuable tool for enhancing their soft skills. Participants reported that platforms facilitate the sharing of information and ideas, which is crucial for developing communication skills (Manor & Segev, 2020; Ameir, 2021). Moreover, students noted that engaging in discussions on these platforms helps them practice critical thinking and cultural awareness, both of which are essential for diplomatic literacy (Grincheva, 2015; Latif, 2023).

5. CONCLUSION

Social media represents more than a communication platform it is a sophisticated learning ecosystem. By fostering critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, and effective communication, digital platforms are reshaping how young people understand and navigate an interconnected global landscape.

The research underscores the importance of embracing digital platforms not as passive consumption spaces, but as active learning environments that can significantly contribute to personal and professional skill development

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