DIGITAL IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION AND VISUAL PEDAGOGY: AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF INSTAGRAM'S USE AS A PSYCHOSOCIAL LEARNING ECOSYSTEM AT TANJUNG BATU STATE HIGH SCHOOL 1

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ABSTRACT

Amidst the wave of digital disruption that marks the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the transition to Society 5.0, the global education paradigm is undergoing a fundamental reconfiguration. The ontological boundaries between physical classroom spaces and virtual social media spaces are becoming increasingly blurred, creating a hybrid learning environment that demands radical pedagogical adaptation. This study aims to explore its existential role as a "digital canvas" in the formation of adolescents' psychosocial identity, as mapped out in Erik Erikson's developmental theory framework. Through a rigorous qualitative approach with an instrumental case study design, this report delves into the dynamics of interaction between students, teachers, and social media algorithms. Field findings reveal that Instagram functions as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it acts as an enabler of creativity and collaboration through the Student-Generated Content (SGC) mechanism, allowing students to actualize themselves and develop critical visual literacy competencies. On the other hand, this integration triggers significant social anxiety due to the phenomenon of context collapse—a situation where traditional audience segregation (teachers, peers, family) collapses into a single monitoring entity, creating intense performative pressure for students. This analysis also highlights how gender and digital literacy background influence students' self-presentation strategies in the digital public sphere.

Keywords: Social Media, Instagram, Self-Identity, SMA N 1 Tanjung Batu

1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of human activities and technology in the modern era has become a fundamental aspect that has drastically reconstructed the social, economic, and educational ways of life. Digital technology is no longer merely a tool or peripheral instrument, but has metamorphosed into an ecological environment in which contemporary human

interactions take place. In the context of Indonesian education, this tectonic shift is marked by massive internet penetration and the almost universal adoption of mobile devices among the younger generation.

Referring to the latest data released by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) for the 2024-2025 period, the internet penetration rate in Indonesia has reached a phenomenal 79.5%. 1 This figure represents a significant jump from previous years, with a total connected population reaching around 221 million people.3 This data is not just a statistic, but an indicator of demographic and sociological shifts, where the internet has become a primary infrastructure of daily life, on par with electricity or clean water. More specifically, the survey revealed that Generation Z (aged 12-27), which is the current demographic cohort of high school students, has the highest contribution to internet usage, reaching 34.4% of total users, surpassing the Millennial Generation.

This phenomenon is reinforced by the "Digital 2024: Indonesia" report, which shows that there are 139 million active social media users in Indonesia, equivalent to 49.9% of the total population.5 Among the various platforms available, Instagram occupies a strategic position as one of the most dominant social media platforms. Data shows that Instagram's advertising reach in Indonesia in early 2024 is equivalent to 36.2% of the total population, or covers around 85.3% of total monthly active internet users. 5 This statistic confirms that for Indonesian teenagers, Instagram is not just a photo-sharing app, but a digital town square where they socialize, seek information, and shape their identities.

At Tanjung Batu 1 Public High School, this national macro reality is clearly manifested in the micro dynamics of the classroom. Initial observations and background documents show that students' dependence on mobile phones (smartphones) is already very high.7 These devices have become an extension of their cognition. In this situation, the traditional one-way (teacher-centered) education model that prohibits the use of gadgets in the classroom has become increasingly irrelevant, even counterproductive. There is a widening gap between the students' lifeworld, which is digital, fast-paced, and visual, and the school world, which is often analog, slow, and textual.

Therefore, the integration of social media into the learning process is no longer just an innovative option or a passing trend, but a strategic imperative. The use of Instagram as a learning medium offers the potential to bridge this gap, turning technological "distractions" into pedagogical assets. However, as with any disruptive innovation, this integration brings its own complexities. Advances in information technology, as noted by Agustinus T. (2018), have a significant ambivalent impact; they bring efficiency and connectivity, but also open the door to character degradation, the spread of false information, cyberbullying, and identity crises.7

Although the potential use of social media in education has been widely discussed, its psychosocial impact is often overlooked in technical-pedagogical discourse. Existing research often focuses on cognitive learning outcomes (test scores) or behavioral engagement, but fails to explore how academic exposure in the digital public sphere affects the self-structure of developing students.

High school students are in a critical stage of development according to Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory, namely the Identity vs. Role Confusion stage.7 At this stage, their main developmental task is to form a coherent self-identity. Social media, with its likes, comments, and followers features, introduces quantitative metrics to self-worth that can distort this identity formation process. When the classroom is moved to Instagram, students are not only faced with subject matter, but also with an invisible audience and context collapse.

At Tanjung Batu 1 Public High School, this phenomenon has become an interesting topic of discussion. This school actively encourages student development in various fields, but there has been no comprehensive mapping of how this digital intervention affects students' psychological well-being.7 Does the requirement to upload assignments on social media increase their confidence, or does it trigger social anxiety? How do students navigate the line between personal privacy and academic obligations? These questions form the ontological basis for this study.

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2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach with an Instrumental Case Study design. Referring to Robert Stake's (1995) methodology, instrumental case studies are used when the researcher's main objective is not only to understand the case itself intrinsically, but also to use the case as an instrument to understand broader issues or formulate theoretical generalizations.[21]

In this study, SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Batu is positioned as an "instrument" to dissect the phenomenon of interaction between digital education and adolescent psychosocial development. The choice of this design is based on the need to gain an in-depth understanding of the real-life context in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined, as is characteristic of case studies. The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Batu, located in Tanjung Laut Village, Tanjung Batu District, Ogan Ilir, South Sumatra.[7] This location was strategically chosen to represent the dynamics of technology adoption in semi-urban areas of Indonesia, which often have different sociological characteristics from large metropolitan cities.

The research subjects were determined using purposive sampling to ensure information-rich cases. The subject inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. Active students in grades 11 and 12 at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Batu.
2. Active Instagram users (have an account and use it for at least 1 hour per day).
3. Have taken or are currently taking courses that integrate Instagram-based assignments.

Key informants in this study included students from various academic backgrounds (science/social studies), including Ahmad Zain (Grade 12 Science 1), Amie Syahri (Grade 12 Science 2), Ririn Riani Putri (Grade 12

Science 4), and Fathir Al Fajri (Grade 12 Social Studies 2), as well as teachers of related subjects.7 To ensure data validity, this study applied triangulation of data collection techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participant and digital observation, and documentation study. Data analysis was conducted using the Thematic Analysis method developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was chosen for its flexibility in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

a. Classroom Transformation: Instagram as an Informal LMS

Research findings show that at Tanjung Batu 1 Public High School, Instagram has evolved beyond its recreational function to become an effective informal Learning Management System (LMS). Teachers and students utilize the Feed, Story, and Reels features to distribute materials, collect assignments, and engage in pedagogical interactions.

One of the most notable structural innovations is the use of Group Accounts (e.g., @samskriti.nusantara) for Sociology courses.7 This mechanism is designed to address several technical and ethical challenges:

- Portfolio Centralization: Student assignments are curated in one dedicated account, making it easier for teachers to assess and monitor progress without having to search through hundreds of students' personal accounts.
- Academic Integrity: The timestamp feature on Instagram posts provides irrefutable evidence of the time of collection, minimizing the potential for deadline manipulation that often occurs with physical assignment collection.
- Democratization of Roles: Creating Instagram content (videos/posters) requires a variety of skills: material research, script writing, graphic design, videography, and account

management. This allows students with different talents to contribute equally to group work.

Ahmad Zain (Grade 12 Science 1) reflected on his shift in perception of this method:

> *"Honestly, at first I thought it was strange that we were learning through social media, which is our personal domain. But it turned out to be fun. The assignments became more exciting because they were more diverse, such as when we had art assignments and read poetry. Even though I was a little embarrassed, it turned out to be fun, and the important thing is that there was still educational value."*
> (Ahmad,IPA)

Ahmad's narrative highlights the initial cognitive dissonance—the conflict between the perception of Instagram as a private space and the intrusion of school assignments. However, this dissonance was gradually resolved through the elements of gamification and the variety of assignments offered by social media, which increased the students' intrinsic motivation.

b. Identity Simulation: Role-Playing and Empathy Development

In line with Erikson's theory, research has found that social media-based tasks facilitate identity exploration through role-playing. One in-depth case study is a project to create short videos on the theme of cyberbullying.7

In this project, students not only discussed bullying theoretically, but also "experienced" it simulatively through the roles they played. Meydina Azzahra, the lead actress in the video, revealed the profound emotional impact:

> *"At first, I thought it was just a regular assignment, but when I started writing the script and acting, I gained a deeper understanding of how cyberbullying victims feel. It turns out that the impact can make people lose their enthusiasm, feel ashamed, and even afraid to go to school. I also started to rethink my attitude on social media."*

This quote indicates that Visual Pedagogy on Instagram is able to touch on the affective domain, which is often difficult to reach using conventional methods. Through this creative process, students develop empathy—a key component in emotional and social maturity (Intimacy vs. Isolation phase). Instagram becomes a reflective mirror (digital mirror) that allows students to evaluate their own behavior and moral values.

c.   The Visibility Paradox: Between Exhibition and Inhibition

Although it provides pedagogical benefits, field data reveals the dark side of digital transparency: the emergence of intense social anxiety. Not all students have the same social capital or confidence to appear on the public stage of Instagram.

Ririn Riani Putri (Grade 12 Science 4) expressed her fears:

> *"Actually, I'm a little unsure of myself. Because I think my work isn't that good. If I upload it, I'm afraid my friends will leave negative comments." (Ririn, IPA)*

Fathir Al Fajri (Grade 12 Social Studies 2) adds the dimensions of gender and communication skills:

> *"Yes, I also feel embarrassed. Especially if I have to make a video, I'm not very good at speaking. So it feels like it's not cool to post it." (Fathir, IPS)*

These findings are crucial. The fear of judgment and high aesthetic standards on Instagram ("not cool," "not good enough") become barriers to participation. Students feel that their academic work must compete with the content of professional influencers that floods their feeds. The term "not cool" indicates the pressure to conform to popular youth culture standards that often conflict with academic values.

Table 1 below summarizes the comparison between students' positive and negative perceptions of using Instagram in learning.

Tabel 1. Student Perceptions of Instagram Integration

Dimensions	Positive Response (Adaptive)	Negative Response (Resistant)
Motivation	Feeling that tasks are more exciting, creative, and not monotonous.	Feeling burdened by high visual standards.
Identity	Opportunity for self-branding and showcasing talent.	Fear of damaging one's image (loss of face).
Interaction	Dynamic group collaboration and division of roles.	Anxiety about peer judgment.
Privacy	Accepting the integration of public and private spaces.	Feeling that privacy is invaded by school authorities.

DISCUSSION

a. Analysis of the Context Collapse Phenomenon in Education

The findings regarding the anxiety experienced by Ririn and Fathir can be explained theoretically through the concept of Context Collapse (Marwick & boyd, 2011). In a physical school environment, there is a clear segregation of audiences: behavior in front of teachers (formal context) differs from behavior in the cafeteria with friends (informal context).

However, when school assignments are uploaded to Instagram, this dividing wall collapses. Students are forced to speak to a dual audience: teachers (who assess academic substance) and peers (who assess "coolness" or social value). This tension creates cognitive dissonance. Students fear that if they appear too "diligent" or "academic," they will lose social status in the eyes of their friends (being considered 'cringe' or "try-hard"). Conversely, if they are too casual, their academic grades are threatened.

This is the essence of Context Collapse in the realm of education: the inability to vary one's self-presentation according to specific audiences because all audiences are present in the same space at the same time.18

The strategy of using Group Accounts found at SMA N 1 Tanjung Batu is unconsciously a brilliant defense mechanism against this phenomenon. By using separate accounts, students create artificial "context boundaries." Group accounts become a "semi-public" space dedicated to their academic persona, protecting their personal accounts from confusing context mixing.

b. The Dynamics of Imagined Audience and Peer Surveillance

Students' concerns about "peer comments" are more dominant than concerns about teacher grades. This confirms Erikson's theory that in adolescence, peer group reference is the main determinant of behavior.

On social media, peer surveillance occurs constantly (24/7). The concept of Imagined Audience 17 explains that students often imagine the most critical audience when creating content. Fathir felt "uncool" not because his teacher said so, but because he internalized the aesthetic standards of "cool" that prevailed in his friends' imagined community.

Therefore, the successful use of social media in learning is highly dependent on classroom culture. Teachers need to actively build new social norms in the digital classroom space, where positive support and constructive comments are valued, to mitigate the negative impact of this critical imagined audience.

c. Student-Generated Content as Literacy Empowerment

Despite the challenges, Student-Generated Content (SGC) shows tremendous potential. Students at SMA N 1 Tanjung Batu don't just consume information, they produce it. In the process, they learn vital 21st-century skills:

1. Information Literacy: Researching material for content.
2. Visual Literacy: Graphic design, video composition, aesthetics.
3. Critical Digital Literacy: Understanding how messages are constructed and their impact on audiences.

Amie Syahri emphasizes the need for "proper guidance" so that learning does not become mere play.7 This shows that students recognize the educational potential of this platform if it is managed with the right pedagogical structure. SGC transforms students from objects of education

into empowered subjects, increasing their sense of ownership of their learning process.13

d. Gender Perspectives in Digital Identity

Data analysis also hints at gender dimensions, in line with Herring & Kapidzic (2015) literature, which states that male and female adolescents have different self-presentation strategies on social media.30

In interviews, female students (Meydina, Ririn) tended to be more vocal about emotional and aesthetic aspects ("afraid of being criticized"), while male students (Fathir) focused more on performative competence ("not good at talking/public speaking"). This shows that identity pressure on Instagram may be experienced differently based on gender: girls are more pressured by beauty and social standards, while boys are pressured by standards of competence and dominance. Educators need to be sensitive to these nuances when giving assignments and feedback.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of Instagram into learning at Tanjung Batu 1 Public High School is a complex phenomenon that goes beyond the mere digitization of teaching methods.

1. Pedagogical Effectiveness: Instagram has proven to be effective as a tool for collaboration and creativity, especially through group accounts that facilitate Student-Generated Content.
2. Psychosocial Impact: This utilization plays a significant role in the formation of adolescent identity (Identity vs. Role Confusion stage). It provides a platform for positive role exploration (as in the case of bullying videos), but also presents the risk of anxiety due to context collapse and imagined audience pressure.
3. Strategic Adaptation: Students and teachers intuitively develop adaptation strategies (such as the use of group accounts) to mitigate privacy and psychological risks, demonstrating a continuous negotiation between academic demands and the privacy needs of adolescents.

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