Chapter 12
Self–Comparison in the Digital World:
The Impact to Self–Esteem

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ABSTRACT
In this chapter, the author is interested in studying self-comparison in social media and its effect to the self-esteem in emerging adults. In Indonesia, social media are widely used by various groups. Jakarta is even referred as the capital of a text-based social media. Data in 2016 indicated that social media users in Indonesia have reached high ranking. Indonesia ranked fourth in the world for social media users and ranked first with Facebook with 111 million users, followed by Twitter. Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association explained that the biggest users were dominated by adolescents, amounting to 75.50% of the total users. The use of social media can be influenced by collective culture. This culture can influence how individuals evaluate themselves, including their self-esteem. The topic of the psychological effects of social media has been much discussed. A lot of research conducted on the effect of social on development of self-esteem. Social media becoming a place for comparing oneself to others and it turn out it has a great effect.

INTRODUCTION
Mashall, McLuhan, communication theorist, coined the phrase, “the medium is the message” (Steers, Wickham, & Acitelli, 2014). McLuhan did not mean to imply that individuals should ignore communication through a certain medium, but that people should not only be aware of a medium’s properties but also be aware of how it subtly influences culture and how it may redefine human interactions.

The use of social media is growing rapidly worldwide. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explain that social media is a group of internet-based applications that are designed for social relationships and allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Leonsis (cited by Hardy, 2016) explained that social media is a place where users can be entertained, communicate with each other, and participate

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-1063-6.ch012
in the social environment. Brenner and Smith (2014) found that Facebook and Twitter were the most popular social media websites among Indonesian emerging adults. Kimbrough, Guadagno, Muscannel, and Dill (2013) explained that social media users usually are young people, especially women. Research conducted by “We are Social” in 2018 stated that on average Indonesians spend at least three hours or more a day accessing various types of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Google Plus. The other popular forms of social media are YouTube as a media sharing network and WordPress or Tumblr to share articles with fellow users.

Ayun (2015) explains that adolescents in Indonesia use social media as a means of presenting themselves or forming identities. They often carry out activities such as sharing personal messages with other users and sharing status about their condition at that time. They also share their current locations and photos or videos related to the places or events that they have visited. This behavior indicates that social media can show self-existence. For adolescents and young adults, self-existence and self-esteem are very important. They can display a positive self-image through social media. They can show the enjoyable parts of their life and hope to receive positive responses from other social media users (Foo in Moningka, 2017). This behavior is a strategy to boost their self-esteem.

Statistics showed that the highest users groups of Facebook are teens and emerging adults; young emerging adults over the age of 18 years occupy 42% of total users, followed by older emerging adults aged 25-34 years at 21% (Sandra 2012). According to the data collected in 2014, 87% American adults were connected to internet and more than 50% owned internet connected devices. These numbers increased to 97% and 83% of users between ages of 18 and 29 (Davis, 2016). Davis (2016) explained that social media permeate all aspects of our life, such as work, education, politics, and even social life, including the developments of self and identity.

Indonesian internet users are considered some of the most social people on Earth. Indonesian youth see social media as an everyday necessity (Kemp, 2011). These youths will sacrifice other ‘luxuries’ to ensure their phones have sufficient credit to access mobile data. Indonesians between the ages of 13 and 24 years old have the highest level of interactions through the internet when compared to other cohorts. Arnett (2006) mentioned that emerging adults around age 18 to 25 are the highest users of social media. This period is characterized by instability and the search for stability and transition. The transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood is a crucial period in the formation of self-esteem as a part of self-concept.

The self is an important part of humans. The self relates to how we see ourselves and it also helps us to adapt to the environment. It is formed from the interaction between the potential that exists within us and within the environment. The environment might include parenting style, schools, neighborhoods, and the peer group. Nowadays, the digital world is becoming part of our environment. The aim of this chapter is to examine the effects of social media on self-esteem. The use of social media is massively increasing. This phenomenon can affect the formation of self. Social media allows people to easily observe other people, accessing any information, and knowing about other people’s lives. It can also lead to upward or downward self-comparison that leads to how they respect themselves. The concept of how individuals value themselves is known as self-esteem.