

Utilization of Social Media in the Community Service Program: A Study from Jambi, Indonesia

Dion Ginanto

UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, Indonesia

dionefrijum@uinjambi.ac.id

How to Cite: Ginanto, D. (2024). Utilization of Social Media in the Community Service Program: A Study from Jambi, Indonesia. *JSEAIS*, 3(2), 21-30. <https://doi.org/10.30631/jseaisv3i2.2883>

Abstract

The Community Service Program (Kuliah Kerja Nyata - KKN) is one of the flagship programs of universities that provides students with experience and opportunities to serve the community. Through designed and implemented work programs, students can directly apply the knowledge learned in lectures to society. To promote, engage, and succeed in KKN programs, students, lecturers, and the community require communication tools to facilitate every activity agenda. One effective communication medium adaptable to current developments is social media, such as Instagram, Facebook, blogs, YouTube, and Twitter. Social media has become an effective tool in implementing education and community service processes.

Studies on the use of social media in learning at schools and universities have been widely conducted by researchers (e.g., Hudson et al., 2020; Harris, 2020; Kuswardhani, 2020); however, evaluations of social media usage in community service activities remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to explore the use of social media in implementing the 2021 Community Service Program. The ultimate goal of this research is to provide input for communities, lecturers, students, and policymakers in their efforts to enhance the quality of community service programs in the form of KKN. Using semi-structured interviews and observations involving 10 students from three regencies in Jambi Province, this study finds that social media serves three primary functions for students in community service programs: (1) as a medium for positive campaigns; (2) to disseminate information about social movements; and (3) as a tool for accountability and transparency.

Keywords: *community, community service, KKN, social media, university program.*



Introduction

The Community Service Program (KKN) is a prominent initiative in higher education designed to provide students with hands-on experience and opportunities to contribute to the community (Rohman, Badrudin, & Anwar, 2020). Through the work programs designed and implemented, students can directly apply academic knowledge to real-world settings. Additionally, students can apply soft skills acquired through their experiences in organizational and social activities within their campuses.

As one of Indonesia's state Islamic universities, UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi envisions itself as a locomotive of change. UIN Jambi aspires to act as a catalyst for positive transformation, making community service programs (KKN) a priority agenda to convey the university's vision and implement campus programs as agents of change. Hence, students and lecturers involved in these community service programs must enhance their knowledge, technology skills, and ability to integrate into the community. With well-mastered cognitive and non-cognitive skills, students are expected to bridge communication between communities, businesses, governments, and universities, fostering effective collaboration to promote rural development.

The vision of the 2021 KKN at UIN Jambi is "Returning to the Village, Building Together," aligned with the central government's agenda of starting development from villages. The flagship programs executed by each group are tailored to the village's potential and aligned with priority village development programs, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has persisted for two years globally, has compelled the education sector to reduce face-to-face learning activities. This includes KKN programs, where the government has strictly limited activities involving public gatherings (Al Umar, Savitri, Pradani, Mutohar, & Khamid, 2021). Consequently, universities in Indonesia have transitioned from conventional KKN to "Home-Based KKN" (KKN-DR). This adjustment represents a tangible breakthrough, enabling community service to continue without compromising government efforts to curb COVID-19 transmission. Students returned to their respective villages or joined peers residing in nearby villages to collaboratively implement empowerment programs in their hometowns.

To promote, engage, and succeed in KKN programs, students, lecturers, and the community require communication tools to facilitate activities. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, blogs, YouTube, and Twitter have become effective and adaptable communication tools in current contexts (Atila, 2018). Social media today serves as an effective medium for education and community service processes.

Research on the use of social media in school and university learning contexts is abundant (e.g., Hudson et al., 2020; Harris, 2020; Kuswardhani, 2020); however, studies evaluating the use of social media in community service activities are still limited. Therefore, this research aims to explore the use of social media in implementing the 2021 Community Service Program. The ultimate goal is to provide



insights for communities, lecturers, students, and policymakers to enhance the quality of community service programs in the form of KKN.

Therefore, this research aims to deeply understand the use of social media in the implementation of the 2021 Community Service Program (KKN). In addition, it also aims to describe the advantages and disadvantages of social media platforms used during the 2021 KKN program.

Community Service during the Pandemic

Community service activities should not be hindered despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, Covid-19 can serve as an opportunity for universities to be present in the community, one of which is by assisting village governments in formulating and implementing emergency Covid-19 policies. Active collaboration between universities, the community, and village officials can help reduce the burden on village leaders and staff in their efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19 while ensuring that the local economy remains unaffected.

Moreover, the return of university students to villages and their involvement in development efforts can contribute to: (1) Increasing community awareness and knowledge about Covid-19, its health risks, and preventive behaviors; (2) Supporting the implementation of Covid-19 prevention policies at the grassroots level (in villages) through community safeguarding programs; (3) Empowering the economy, especially in small and medium enterprises (SMEs); (3) Assisting village schools in ensuring students continue to learn during the pandemic; (4) Inspiring and innovating activities to boost the local economy, community hygiene, village beautification, village icons, and creative tourism programs (Rohman, Badrudin, & Anwar, 2020).

Social Media and Community Service

According to Mandibergh (2012), social media facilitates interaction and collaboration among users, resulting in shared content. Meanwhile, Shirky (2008) defines social media as tools that enhance cooperation and content sharing through online methods. Similarly, Briggs and Burke (2009) describe social media as a medium for sharing content, gathering, and communicating, which becomes a unique strength for its users. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of internet-based applications and technologies that enable content exchange among users. Lastly, Carslon (2010) defines social media as media that allows users to engage in social interactions and express opinions in a global forum without the constraints of time and space. In essence, social media is a platform for sharing information, opening discussions, and exchanging knowledge using internet-based platforms.

Theoretical Framework

Social Media for Positive Campaign

Tina (2020) revealed that KKN students at Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS) used social media for COVID-19 outreach. Tina (2020) further explained that education delivery via social media such as WhatsApp and Instagram was very effective, as the majority of residents now use smartphones. During the pandemic, both teenagers and adults spent more time at home, interacting more through their smartphones. Thus, educational campaigns about wearing masks, maintaining social distance, handwashing, limiting mobility, and avoiding crowds could be conducted more efficiently and effectively. Frequent reminders via WhatsApp and Instagram campaigns could help consistently improve public awareness of health protocols.

Social Media for Disseminating Social Movement Information

All forms of information today can be easily accessed anytime and anywhere. Advances in technology and information have facilitated the spread of news within seconds. Especially now, with the existence of social media groups, information obtained from one group can be easily forwarded to other social media groups. It is no surprise that information acquired from social media groups can trigger massive social movements, whether positive or negative.

The unlimited speed of information access, unrestricted by time and distance, is like a double-edged sword: when used properly, it can have positive impacts, but when used for negative purposes, it can lead to harmful consequences. The widespread access to social media, which is almost universally owned by individuals, can also reduce costs that were previously needed for activities such as printing pamphlets, banners, or flyers (Aday, 2010; Meier, 2009). Any form of event information that traditionally required printing can now be distributed in digital form through social media. Social movement mobilization today can be conducted in just minutes, without requiring significant effort or expense.

Social Media as a Tool for Accountability/Transparency

Social media has long served as a means to provide oversight of government activities. It has also become a unique force ensuring that governments are held accountable in carrying out their agendas (Aday, 2010). This is because it is increasingly difficult for governments to hide or manipulate information due to the power of social media, which easily spreads information and creates new collective forces. Social media also provides a platform for the public to create spaces for discussion, which can massively oversee the governance process (Castells, 2007).

Similarly, in the context of KKN programs, social media should be utilized to enhance accountability and professionalism in implementing community service programs. Various forms of program mismanagement or failure to execute planned



activities can be easily exposed to the public. Social media oversight has proven capable of exerting pressure on program implementers to ensure that activities are conducted in an accountable and transparent manner (Aday, 2010).

Methodology

The research employs a descriptive-analytical method, which describes the phenomenon of social media use by students in implementing the 2021 KKN program in a detailed and in-depth manner. The data collection techniques used are as follows:

1. Observation. Data collection through observation is necessary to understand the conditions and phenomena occurring in the field. There are two types of observation: non-participatory and participatory observation (Glesne, 2011). Atkinson (1983) argues that almost all social research typically uses participatory observation because researchers find it difficult to obtain data without becoming part of the object under study. Furthermore, Glesne (2011) emphasizes that participatory observation is an approach in obtaining data where the researcher actively integrates into the environment being studied. Therefore, in collecting data for this study, the researchers conducted participatory observation, becoming part of the environment being studied.

2. Interview. Interviews are an essential part of qualitative research, as they enable researchers to obtain primary data directly. Through interviews, researchers can record what they see, hear, and feel, which is then analysed as needed (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Moreover, Fontana and Frey (2005) classify interviews into two types: (1) face-to-face interviews or direct interviews; and (2) non-face-to-face interviews conducted via telephone, Skype, or Zoom. Interviews can also be structured, unstructured, or semi-structured. For the purposes of this study, researchers used a semi-structured interview approach to maintain a semi-formal communication style while ensuring the interview remained within its scope. Glesne (2011) asserts that interviews will be successful if researchers use open-ended questions in a semi-structured manner.

3. Document Analysis. This study also uses document analysis (Sukardi, 2003), where documents related to the 2021 KKN program and social media use were used as data sources for subsequent analysis.

Finding and Discussion

Social Media for Positive Campaigns

When asked about the benefits of using social media in community service programs, Anton (a pseudonym) responded, "Social media plays a role in providing information about the state of the village and the local wisdom in the Kukerta area and publicizing the potentials of the village in the Kukerta region." Similarly, Rina stated that social media could inspire positive energy within the community. Rina explained, "From the positive posts that have been shared on social media, it is hoped

that the community will be encouraged to participate in these positive activities.” Doni also shared a similar view about the benefits of social media, emphasizing the influence of positive posts on community motivation.

This finding is in line with the previous research (Tina, 2020) that using social media may help students to promote positive campaign. Villages have extraordinary potential that can be introduced to the public. The spirit of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) in villages can always serve as an inspiration for urban communities. This positive culture of mutual cooperation and local wisdom can be easily promoted through social media. With the assistance of KKN students, who typically have extensive social media networks, social media is expected to help showcase the remarkable potential of villages.

Social Media to Disseminate Information About Social Movements

Amir noted that during the pandemic, the community became more active on social media, making it easier to promote or campaign for social movements. He explained, “During the pandemic, people were more active on social media, making it easier to conduct outreach or campaigns for social movements through social media.” Ahmad emphasized the efficiency and speed of social media in spreading information about social movements, saying, “Through social media, information about social movements is more effective and quickly reaches the community, provided the information is accurate.” Sinta highlighted the importance of using social media positively, “To utilize social media towards positive goals rather than wasting time.”

As in previous studies (Aday, 2010; Meier, 2009), social media provides ease in disseminating information about social movements. KKN students engage in numerous volunteering activities, which can be easily shared with the outside world. This can certainly inspire other volunteering activities, which have recently been declining among younger generations. The spirit of engaging in positive activities can spread effectively with the right medium, and social media plays a crucial role in this regard.

Social Media as a Tool for Accountability and Transparency

In addition to positive campaigns and social movement information, social media also serves as a tool for accountability. Ali stated, “Our initial mission was to provide a little knowledge about Kukerta, but without transparency, people might wonder what the students are actually doing.” Budi added, “Posting these activities is a form of transparency that we have conducted during Kukerta, especially during the pandemic.” Dinda emphasized how social media helped introduce village potentials during

restricted times, saying, "Social media helps showcase the potentials of each village, especially during the pandemic when activities are limited."

The findings of this study fully support previous research (Castells, 2007; Aday, 2010) on accountability. KKN activities are funded through contributions from members or sponsorships from private entities and local governments. To ensure accountability for these activities, transparency and accountability are essential. Social media greatly assists students in this regard. Frequent posting of activities signifies that the planned programs are being implemented effectively. Activity reports can also be supported by the extensive publications shared across platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and others.

Conclusion

Similar to previous studies on the use of social media in education, the use of social media in community service at one Islamic university in Jambi Province serves three functions: (1) social media can be used as a medium for positive campaigns about activities or potentials in the village where community service takes place; (2) social media also functions as a medium for disseminating information about positive movements to the community; and (3) social media functions as a medium for accountability and transparency.

However, to further enhance the effectiveness of social media in community service programs, KKN organizers must also provide training to students about the importance of using social media to combat the spread of fake news. Additionally, students can play a role in fighting against false or misleading posts that may spread within the village environment where they serve. In this way, the use of social media for community service programs can leave a more positive impression and contribute to the success of other community service programs.

References

- Al Umar, A.U.A., Savitir, A.S.N., Pradani, T.S., Mutohar., Khamid, N. (2021) Peranan kuliah kerja nyata sebagai wujud pengabdian kepada masyarakat di tengah pandemic Covid-19 (Studi kasus IAIN Salatiga KKN 2021). Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat. Vol.01(01).
- Aday, S. (2010). Blogs and bullets: New Media in contentious politics. United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC
<http://www.usip.org/files/resources/pw65.pdf>
- Atila, Cemal. 2018. Daftar Situs Jaringan Sosial. dari
<https://socialmedialist.org/daftar-media-sosial.html> [26 Desember 2018].

- Atkison, E. (2004). Thinking outside the box: An exercise in heresy. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 10, 111-129.
- Castells, M. (2007). Communication, power and counter-power in the network Society. *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 1, pp. 238-266.
- Carlson, N. (2010). At last – The full story of how Facebook was founded. Business Insider. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-facebook-was-founded-2010-3>.
- Boyd. 2009. Hubungan intensitas mengakses sosial media terhadap perilaku belajar mata pelajaran produktif pada siswa kelas xi jasa boga di SMK N 3 Klaten. Dalam Yuzy Akbari Vindita Riyanti (2016). Skripsi. Yogyakarta: Pendidikan Teknik Boga FT Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta.
- Briggs, A., & Burke, P. (2006). Sejarah sosial media: Dari Gutenberg sampai internet. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- Fontana, A. & Frey, J. (2005). "The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement." In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, 3rd ed.), pp. 695-727. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers*. Pearson. Boston: Massachusetts
- Harris, A. (2020). COVID-19-school leadership in crisis? *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 5(3/4), 321-326.
- Huma, Haider (2011) Helpdesk research report: Social media and reform networks, protests, social movements, and coalitions. *Governance and Social Development Resource Centre*.
- Hudson, L., Mahendrarajah, S., Walton, M., Pascaris, M.J., Melim, S., Rutterberg-Rozen, R. (2020). Leadership in education during COVID-19: Learning and growth through a crisis. *Journal of Digital and Technology*.
- Kaplan, A., & Haenlein, M. (2010). User of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*.
- Kuswardhani, R.M. (2020). Leadership practices amidst the global pandemic – A case study exploring distributed leadership in an international school in Southeast Asia (Unpublished PhD thesis). Northeastern University, MA, USA.
- Meier, P. (2009). The Impact of the information revolution on protest frequency in repressive contexts. Paper presented at the 50th International Studies Association Conference New York City, 15-17 February, New York City <http://irevolution.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/meier-isa-2009-final.pdf>



- Mandibergh. 2012. Hubungan Intensitas Mengakses Sosial Media terhadap Perilaku Belajar Mata Pelajaran Produktif pada Siswa Kelas XI Jasa Boga di SMK N 3 Klaten. Dalam Yuzi Akbari Vindita Riyanti (2016). Skripsi. Yogyakarta: Pendidikan Teknik Boga FT Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta.
- Rohman, H., Badrudin, A., Anwar. (2020). Pedoman pelaksanaan KKN back to village dalam pencegahan dan antisipasi dampak Covid-19. LP2M Universitas Jember.
- Shirky, C., 2008, *Here Comes Everybody: How Change Happens When People Come Together*, Penguin Books, London
- Sukardi (2003). *Metodologi penelitian pendidikan*. Bumi Aksara: Yogyakarta.
- Tina, Adelia. (2020). Mahasiswa KKN Covid-19 UNS memanfaatkan media sosial untuk sosialisasi Covid-19. Kumparan. Dapat diakses di:
<https://kumparan.com/dellestari18/mahasiswa-kkn-covid-19-uns-manfaatkan-media-sosial-untuk-sosialisasi-covid-19-1tjYmpavyCq/full>