THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN STRENGTHENING MULTICULTURAL TOLERANCE AMONG DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

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Abstract. *Social media has become one of the most popular mediums in the current digital era. However, with the ease of information access and communication offered by social media, various challenges and problems have also emerged, one of which is the decreasing level of multicultural tolerance in the digital community. The rise of hate speech on various social media platforms shows that digital citizens still lack a tolerant attitude. Multicultural tolerance is crucial in diverse societies, where cultural, religious, and racial diversity is increasingly complex and demands respect for differences. Therefore, research on the role of social media in strengthening multicultural tolerance is essential. This study aims to examine how social media can strengthen multicultural tolerance among digital citizens and find effective strategies to improve multicultural tolerance through social media. This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method to identify the factors influencing multicultural tolerance and study the role of social media in strengthening multicultural tolerance. The results show that social media can strengthen multicultural tolerance in the current digital community, but it needs to be used wisely and with good digital literacy to reduce social conflicts and enhance diversity in society. Therefore, the results of this research are expected to provide an important contribution to understanding the impact and role of social media in strengthening multicultural tolerance and provide strategic suggestions for using social media to strengthen multicultural tolerance in the digital community.*

. **Keywords**: *Digital Citizenship, Multiculturalism, Social Media, Strategies, and Tolerance*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, we have witnessed great advances in technology, which have changed the way we communicate, work, and interact with the world around us (Schwab, 2019). Technology has helped increase productivity and moved humans towards achieving higher-value work outcomes (Lim, 2019). Rapid developments and new innovations emerging every day, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and blockchain, have allowed us to connect with others around the world, work efficiently, and access information easily with technology (Schwab, 2019). These new technologies open doors to possibilities we never imagined before and provide solutions to many of the problems faced by humans.

The industrial revolution is a major change in technology, production, and thinking that occurred in a relatively short time and caused significant changes in the way humans live, work, and interact (Fonna, 2019). The first industrial revolution began in the late 18th century with the invention of the steam engine, followed by the second industrial revolution in the late 19th century with the discovery of electricity and assembly lines, the third industrial revolution in the mid-20th century with the emergence of computer technology and automation, and currently, we are experiencing the Fourth Industrial Revolution characterized by the emergence of AI, robots, autonomous vehicles, algorithm-controlled machines, autonomous weapon systems (Lim, 2019). The industrial revolution enables higher production efficiency, changes in the way we work and think, and also brings new challenges and opportunities in various fields.

In the 21st century, the world has reached the peak of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a world that includes the emergence of AI, robots, autonomous vehicles, algorithm-controlled machines, autonomous weapon systems, algorithm-based predictive behavior software/apps, and the beginning of the social media revolution. Facebook is a good example of this social media revolution. Facebook was created for users interested in putting their personal data online in the form of comments, photos, emoticons, and textual information and then sharing it with other network members or with the general public (Lim, 2019). The Fourth Industrial Revolution has the potential to change the way we work, interact, and live, but it also needs to be balanced with the right policies and regulations to ensure responsible and sustainable use of technology.

The balance point of the web, over the past few decades, has shifted from top-down platforms that mimic mass media to user-driven online platforms. Currently, Kaplan & Haenlein state that popular mainstream online platforms are uniformly marked as "social media" - ranging from social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Google Plus to Wikipedia and YouTube. Social media is often seen as an integral element of Web 2.0, a term coined by O'Reilly to describe the development of new platforms, features, and uses built on user participation in the form of user-generated content, decentralization, and rich user experiences (Ariel & Avidar, 2015). The development of social media has contributed greatly to the democratization of information and public engagement in various social and political issues, but it has also brought new challenges in managing and filtering inaccurate or even harmful information.

Social media is a platform that facilitates information sharing and participation (Steenkamp & Hyde-Clarke, 2014), enabling digital citizens to engage in various forms of participation, such as spreading information, influencing public opinion, or even taking collective action. Social media can facilitate positive and understanding discussions about relevant multicultural issues and promote tolerance, equality, and inclusiveness. However, the use of social media without digital literacy can lead to various problems, such as spreading false information (Dame Adjin-Tettey, 2022), phishing or online fraud (Graham & Triplett, 2016), and a platform for spreading hate speech (Mody et al., 2023).

Hate speech is one form of hate crime that is prevalent on social media. Hate speech on Facebook is often expressed through sarcasm rather than explicit insults (Utami & Darmaiza, 2020). Hate speech usually involves aspects of race, skin color, gender, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and others (Pasaribu et al., 2020). Hate speech is contrary to the values of tolerance and unity, and it is a violation of human rights because it can harm and hurt certain groups emotionally and psychologically, and it can worsen social tensions and conflicts, especially in the digital community.
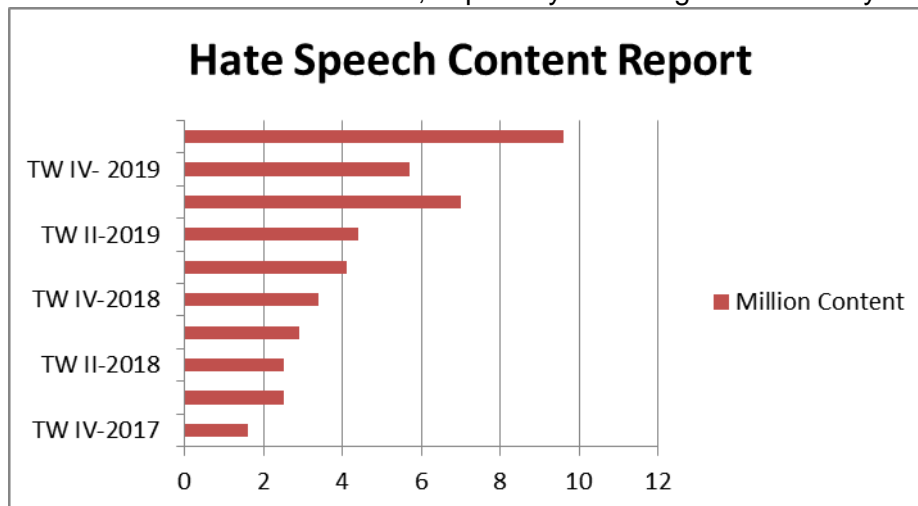
Figure 1. **Follow-up of Hate Speech Content**
Source: Yosepha Pusparisa, (in Katadata, 2020)

Facebook continues to filter out hate speech content that spreads on its social media platform. From October 2017 to March 2020, the number of contents addressed by

Facebook fluctuated but tended to increase. The highest number occurred in the first quarter of 2020, reaching 9.6 million hate speech contents, which had increased compared to the fourth quarter of 2019, which only addressed 5.7 million hate speech contents. Nevertheless, the figure is still higher than in previous years in the same period (Pusparisa, 2020). This is very concerning because the number of social media users will continue to increase every day, so the amount of hate speech on Facebook in the future may exceed 9.6 million if not addressed seriously by both the government and individuals (Ash-Shidiq & Pratama, 2021).

Hate speech cases in the digital space also occur in Indonesia. Since 2017, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics has handled 3,640 contents related to Ethnicity, Religion, Race, and Inter-group (SARA) hate speech. Throughout 2017, there were 13,829 negative contents in the form of hate speech that spread on social media as well as 6,973 fake news. In handling access cut-off of violating contents, Dedy Permadi mentioned three criteria as references. First, contents that contain insults against certain religions in Indonesia. Second, incitement to hate or violence against followers of certain religions. And third, the call to hate individuals from certain groups or ethnicities. Maarif Institute researcher, Khelmy K. Pribadi, stated that negative content spreading on social media in the form of hate speech, fake news, and SARA sentiments (ethnicity, race, and religion) has a significant impact on the thinking and attitudes of young generations, especially at the high school level. Teenagers who are frequently exposed to negative content tend to have intolerant attitudes towards people with different backgrounds (Kominfo, 2021).

Social media is a communication channel used to form or maintain social relationships through the creation and exchange of electronic interpersonal communication. According to LaRose, Connolly, Lee, Li, and Hales, social media can be a platform for exchanging information (Ariel & Avidar, 2015). Therefore, an open and inclusive social media environment can easily obtain and access information about other cultures to create a better understanding of the uniqueness and cultural differences. Moreover, the internet can be a democratic space, where individuals from various backgrounds can interact and communicate easily and promote cross-cultural dialogue that respects and is open to different perspectives (Nakamura, 2008).

Digital citizens use the internet daily for various activities; thus, the internet has become integrated into the daily routines of digital citizens, enabling them to acquire technology skills (Mossberger et al., 2008). In an increasingly digitized and global society, most communication and social relationships among young people are conducted through smartphones and other digital devices (Duek & Nilsberth, 2022), and social media can help strengthen existing social relationships and expand one's social network, which can ultimately help build trust and understanding among individuals. However, social media also plays a role in spreading hate speech based on ethnicity, religion, and race (Mody et al., 2023), where social media is used as a platform to spread messages of intolerance, discrimination, and hatred towards certain groups. This can deepen social group gaps and reinforce unhealthy stereotypes and prejudices.

It is important for us to use social media wisely and responsibly to strengthen social relationships and social tolerance. Social media can be a space for "true dialogue" characterized by positive attributes, such as togetherness and empathy (Kent & Taylor, 2021), and can promote intercultural dialogue. Through social media, digital citizens can communicate and interact with people from different cultural and religious backgrounds, as well as share experiences and thoughts with people from various backgrounds. By communicating openly and positively, digital citizens can strengthen understanding and tolerance among cultures.

This research aims to help improve understanding of how social media can strengthen multicultural tolerance and provide strategic recommendations for the use of social media to achieve this goal. This research is important because multicultural tolerance is a very important principle in modern society that is increasingly complex and

diverse in terms of culture, as tolerance for differences in beliefs and ways of life is seen as a necessary condition for the functioning of society (Verkuyten & Kollar, 2021). Meanwhile, social media has become a primary tool for shaping public opinion (Arianto, 2020) and interacting in today's digital society (Ariel & Avidar, 2015). Therefore, this research will help understand how social media can strengthen multicultural tolerance and provide strategic recommendations for its use. The strategic recommendations resulting from this research can help social media users better understand how they can use social media in a responsible way and strengthen multicultural tolerance. In this way, it is hoped that this research can provide benefits in reducing social conflicts and increasing diversity in society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Media

Social media is a platform or application that allows users to interact and share content online with other users. Social media is often referred to as a "social network" because it forms a network of many people with similar interests and goals (Adorjan & Ricciardelli, 2019). Social media has played a crucial role in shaping communication and social interaction in today's digital era (Adorjan & Ricciardelli, 2019). It enables people to connect with others from different backgrounds, expand the reach of communication, and promote awareness of social and political issues (Vromen, 2017).

Despite the numerous benefits of social media, literature also notes that social media has some negative impacts. For instance, social media can trigger anxiety, depression, and stress among users due to pressure to present a perfect life online (Adorjan & Ricciardelli, 2019). Additionally, social media can spread fake information (Dame Adjin-Tettey, 2022), phishing or online scams (Graham & Triplett, 2016), and a place to spread hate speech (Mody et al., 2023).

2.2 Digital Citizenship

Digital Citizens are individuals who have access to and use digital technology in their daily lives. They use the internet every day for various activities, making the internet integrated into the daily routine of digital citizens, enabling them to gain skills in using technology (Mossberger et al., 2008).

In order to optimize the benefits of digital technology, some studies suggest the need to improve digital literacy and the wise and responsible use of technology (Dame Adjin-Tettey, 2022; Johnston, 2020). In addition, public policies are needed that consider individual rights and privacy in the digital environment, as well as reduce the risk of addiction and other negative impacts of digital technology use (Adorjan & Ricciardelli, 2019).

2.3 Multicultural tolerance

Multicultural tolerance is the ability to learn about and ally with people from different cultures, thereby expanding our own understanding and ability to participate in multicultural processes. Key elements to becoming culturally competent include respecting the way others live and organize the world and being open to learning from them (Kivel, 2007). Multicultural tolerance is considered important in modern society, which is becoming increasingly complex and culturally diverse, as tolerance for differences in beliefs and ways of life is seen as a necessary condition for the functioning of a fair and harmonious society (Eko & Putranto, 2019).

In research conducted, there are various factors that can influence multicultural tolerance, such as socio-economic status, individual psychology, and the firm stance of state institutions against discrimination (Fitriani, 2020). Cross-cultural competence is a highly important trait for those living in a multicultural society. Communication of cultural differences is mostly related to inappropriate emotional responses and feelings of awkwardness and anxiety, which often lead to prejudice and uncertainty. With cross-cultural communication competence, those with different cultural values and

backgrounds can communicate and interact effectively, limiting negative stereotypes and harmful ethnocentrism. Mastery of such competence is believed to prevent conflicts between religions and cultures (Eko & Putranto, 2019).

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a qualitative approach to understand and explain the phenomenon of the role of social media in strengthening multicultural tolerance of digital citizens, using literature review as the data collection technique, where data were collected from various sources such as books, journals, articles, and relevant documents related to the research topic. Qualitative research emphasizes a deep understanding and social context of a phenomenon and combines data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and document analysis to obtain rich and deep information (Okoko et al., 2023). In this case, the research aimed to understand and explain the role of social media in strengthening multicultural tolerance of digital citizens. Essentially, qualitative research seeks to explore information in-depth and holistically about the researched phenomenon and understand the complexity of the phenomenon.

Meanwhile, the data collection technique used in this research was a literature review method. Literature review is a data collection method through studying and understanding information from textbooks, journals, articles, virtual resources, and documents (George, 2008). Literature review is conducted by searching, reading, analyzing, and organizing information from various sources related to the research topic. In conducting literature review, there are several stages that need to be done. The first stage is determining the research topic and making a list of relevant keywords. Next, conducting literature search from various sources such as books, journals, articles, and relevant documents related to the research topic. After that, reading and analyzing the found information and organizing the information according to predetermined categories. Then, interpretation and synthesis of the collected information are conducted and integrated into the research.

In this research, literature review technique was used to collect data about the role of social media in strengthening multicultural tolerance of digital citizens. This was done by searching for references or literature related to the research topic from various sources such as books, journals, articles, and relevant documents related to the research topic. Some criteria used to select relevant literature include accuracy, reliability, and relevance to the research topic. Additionally, it is important to pay attention to the publication year and the freshness of information contained in the literature. After data were collected, data analysis was conducted by reading and understanding the collected information from literature. Data were then analyzed using the content analysis technique, which aimed to identify certain themes or patterns from the collected data (Okoko et al., 2023).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4. 1 Multicultural Tolerance in Digital Society.

In the digital era like today, society is increasingly globally connected through information and communication technology. Cultural and religious diversity in the world is growing and becoming more complex. Multicultural tolerance becomes increasingly important to be understood and applied in this digital era. Tolerance can be defined as an attitude of mutual respect, understanding, and acceptance of cultural, religious, and social identity differences within society (Rahmawati & Haryanto, 2020).

Multicultural tolerance is a principle underlying the relationship between individuals of different cultural and religious backgrounds, and can help minimize conflicts and enhance social harmony. Cross-cultural communication competence and mindful attitudes are necessary for certain members of society to interact and socialize with members of other cultures and religions (Eko & Putranto, 2019). In the digital society, multicultural tolerance becomes increasingly important as technology and the internet have connected people from various parts of the world. This can bring many benefits, but can also trigger conflicts or tensions if there is no understanding and appreciation of diversity.

Digital literacy influences and plays a significant role in everyday life, especially in the decision-making process (Duek & Nilsberth, 2022), thus by understanding multicultural tolerance, it will help digital citizens to understand and appreciate the cultural and religious diversity in their environment, and reduce the possibility of social conflicts or tensions. Understanding multicultural tolerance can also help the digital community to communicate and interact more effectively with individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds. This can enhance cooperation and friendship between individuals of different backgrounds.

Cross-cultural communication competency has become increasingly important in ensuring effective multicultural tolerance. By having cross-cultural communication competency, individuals from different cultural backgrounds and upbringings can communicate and interact effectively, limiting negative stereotypes and ethnocentrism that can be detrimental. Mastery of such competency can help prevent interreligious and intercultural conflicts (Eko & Putranto, 2019). Multicultural tolerance is becoming increasingly important, and cross-cultural communication competency is crucial in ensuring individuals can communicate and interact with those from different cultural and religious backgrounds more effectively and avoid social conflicts or tensions.

Multicultural tolerance encompasses values and principles that need to be understood to create social harmony and avoid intercultural conflicts. The first important value to understand is respect for differences (Purwanto et al., 2020). This means respecting cultural, religious, racial, and other background differences. Every individual has the right to maintain their identity and beliefs. Respecting differences also means not imposing personal views or beliefs on others. The second principle of multicultural tolerance is mutual respect and understanding (Tamsir, 2018). Respecting and understanding means putting oneself in other people's shoes and trying to understand their perspective and life experiences. In this way, we can better understand and appreciate differences, and communicate and interact more effectively.

The third principle of multicultural tolerance is limiting negative stereotypes and ethnocentrism (Juditha, 2015). Negative stereotypes and ethnocentrism can cause discrimination and prejudice against certain individuals or groups. Therefore, we need to limit negative stereotypes and ethnocentrism and try to see individuals from different perspectives. The last principle of multicultural tolerance is cooperation and participation (Prayogi & Rohmah, 2020). We need to build cross-cultural cooperation and participation and avoid polarization that can trigger intercultural conflicts. In this way, we can create an inclusive and fair environment for all individuals.

4. 1 The Role of Social Media in Strengthening Multicultural Tolerance among Digital Citizens

Social media is a technology that has a significant influence on the behavior and attitudes of digital citizens, where social media is one of the factors in shaping public opinion (Arianto, 2020). This indicates that social media can also influence the attitudes of digital citizens towards tolerance of diversity. However, the use of social media needs to be accompanied by an increase in digital literacy. Digital literacy will enhance a person's ability to deal with digital media, such as accessing, understanding content, disseminating, creating, and even updating digital media for decision making (Naufal, 2021). Improper use of social media can lead to an increase in intercultural conflicts, such as cases of discrimination and harassment based on skin color (Boling & Walker, 2021) and hate speech based on ethnicity, religion, and race (Ash-Shidiq & Pratama, 2021; Kominfo, 2021).

The use of social media needs to be accompanied by an increase in digital literacy to be able to have critical awareness, discussions, critical choices, and social action (Kominfo, 2021), so that people can deal with digital media wisely and not cause intercultural conflicts. To strengthen multicultural tolerance, social media can be used to increase access to information about cultural diversity. With broader access to information, people can strengthen their understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity in Indonesia and the world. Social media can also serve as a platform for intercultural discussions and dialogues that open up more opportunities for dialogue and strengthen intercultural tolerance. In this platform, social media users can share

knowledge and experiences and exchange ideas about the diversity of cultures that exist.

Another mechanism that social media can use to strengthen multicultural tolerance is through campaigns or social movements. Campaigns or social movements initiated through social media can strengthen people's awareness and understanding of the importance of intercultural tolerance. Movements such as the #StopAsianHate hashtag function as a discursive space to challenge anti-Asian racism (Lee & Lee, 2023) and the #Papuanlivesmatter movement in 2019 in Indonesia to oppose racism against the Papuan community (Kusumaryati, 2021) can be examples of social movements that can strengthen intercultural tolerance in Indonesia by promoting anti-racist attitudes.

4. 2 Strengthening Multicultural Tolerance Through Social Media Strategy

Social media has become one of the most popular communication and information tools in human life today. However, in addition to being just a tool for interaction and entertainment, social media can also be utilized as a platform to strengthen multicultural tolerance, if social media is friendly and enables people to connect, they should increase users' understanding of people, places, and information around them (Masullo et al., 2022). The right strategies in using social media can help promote awareness and understanding of cultural differences, build bridges between different groups, and encourage tolerance in an increasingly online-connected society.

One important principle of intercultural communication is understanding fundamental cultural differences, so as to avoid negative stereotypes and damaging ethnocentrism. This is also important in the strategy of strengthening multicultural tolerance through social media, where understanding and awareness of cultural differences are crucial in creating an inclusive and tolerant online environment. Effective intercultural communication is believed to help a person develop more meaningful relationships. Therefore, intercultural communication principles are important to be learned and understood by people from various backgrounds. With intercultural communication competence, those with different cultural values and upbringing can communicate and interact effectively, limiting negative stereotypes and damaging ethnocentrism (Eko & Putranto, 2019). In this regard, intercultural communication competence can help promote positive dialogue and discussion on social media, as well as help build bridges between different groups online. Thus, understanding the principles of intercultural communication can play a crucial role in the strategy of strengthening multicultural tolerance through social media.

In this article, we provide proposed strategies that can be considered in using social media, which will then help strengthen multicultural tolerance in an increasingly online-connected society. One strategy we suggest is to develop social campaigns that encourage digital citizens to apply tolerance values in their daily lives.

Figure 2. Strategy for Strenghthening Multicultural Tolerance

Developing a social campaign that encourages digital citizens to practice tolerance can be an effective strategy to strengthen multicultural tolerance through social media. Such campaigns can use various social media platforms to spread positive messages about tolerance and inclusivity and motivate digital citizens to take real action in their daily lives. Examples of such campaigns include hashtags like #StopAsianHate (Lee & Lee, 2023) and #Papuanlivesmatter (Kusumaryati, 2021), which campaigned against all forms of racism.

Engaging influencers and community leaders on social media can be a highly

effective strategy for strengthening multicultural tolerance, especially in this rapidly growing digital era. As well-known figures with large followings on social media, they have significant influence in shaping the opinions and behaviors of netizens (Kostygina et al., 2020). Therefore, influencers can actively participate in social campaigns aimed at promoting values of tolerance, so that these messages can be disseminated widely and effectively in society. Collaboration between influencers or community leaders and the government can be a good solution to strengthen values of tolerance in the increasingly connected online society.

In addition to social media campaigns, multicultural education is also an important strategy to strengthen multicultural tolerance in society. Multicultural education is an effort to cultivate and develop innate physical and spiritual potentials in accordance with the values present in society and culture (Ramadhani & Pangestu, 2022). By incorporating multicultural education into the curriculum, students can learn the values of cultural diversity and develop intercultural communication competencies from an early age. Multicultural education can also help eliminate negative stereotypes and prejudices and promote awareness of the importance of inclusivity and diversity in an increasingly diverse society.

Strengthening the law that governs multicultural tolerance can be an important step to strengthen tolerance in the digital era, especially in the use of social media and the internet. In Indonesia, Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions (UU ITE) is a very important regulation in this regard. Therefore, efforts must be made to integrate values of tolerance in the implementation of the UU ITE, so that the use of social media and the internet can be done responsibly and respect the cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia. With the strengthening of the law governing multicultural tolerance, it is hoped that strict sanctions can be imposed on perpetrators of intolerant acts on social media and the internet, thus forming awareness and responsibility for social media users to apply values of tolerance in their every online action.

The increasing interconnectedness of humans in various fields in this world makes multicultural tolerance an essential aspect. In this era of globalization, the use of technology and information is one way to build harmonious intercultural relationships. Therefore, the strategies we offer are expected to be able to strengthen multicultural tolerance through the responsible use of social media and by respecting cultural differences. Through social campaigns that involve influencers or community leaders, multicultural education, strengthening the law, and wise use of words on social media, it is hoped that society can understand and apply values of tolerance in every online action. Thus, we can optimize the use of social media to strengthen multicultural tolerance and build a more inclusive and friendly world for everyone.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that social media can play an important role in strengthening multicultural tolerance in the current digital era. In a digitally connected society that is increasingly global through information and communication technology, social media can be an effective tool in facilitating intercultural communication and strengthening understanding and appreciation of cultural and religious diversity. However, it should be noted that social media can also worsen social conflicts and tensions if not used wisely and responsibly. Therefore, it is important to have an effective strategy in using social media to strengthen multicultural tolerance.

Multicultural literacy plays a significant role in strengthening multicultural tolerance in the current digital society. In the digital society, multicultural tolerance becomes increasingly important because technology and the internet have connected people from various parts of the world. This can bring many benefits, but can also trigger conflicts or tensions if there is no understanding and appreciation of diversity. The ability to communicate and interact with people from different cultural and religious backgrounds more effectively is also an important factor in strengthening multicultural tolerance in the digital society. Therefore, the strategic recommendations resulting from this research can help social media users better understand how they can use social

media in a responsible manner and strengthen multicultural tolerance. This research is expected to provide benefits in reducing social conflicts and increasing diversity in society.

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