



Privacy Eroded in the Age of Social Media: The Threat of Digital Technology to Security, Ethics and the Sustainability of Human Social Life

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of digital technology, particularly social media, has transformed human interaction while simultaneously posing serious challenges to individual privacy. Social media functions not only as a communication tool but also as a digital public sphere that encourages extensive disclosure of personal information. This study aims to examine the phenomenon of privacy erosion in the social media era and its implications for data security, digital ethics, and the sustainability of social life. A qualitative approach with a literature review method was employed by analyzing academic books, national and international journal articles, and relevant institutional reports. The findings indicate that data-driven economic models, low privacy awareness, and growing dependence on digital systems accelerate the loss of individual control over personal data. Furthermore, non-transparent data practices and excessive social media use negatively affect social resilience and mental well-being, particularly among younger generations. Strengthening digital literacy, ethical awareness, and data protection regulations is therefore essential to ensure sustainable social development in the digital age

INTRODUCTION

Background

The rapid development of digital technology has brought significant changes to human life, particularly through the presence of social media. Social media not only functions as a means of communication and information exchange, but has also become a virtual public space where individuals openly express their identities, activities, and personal lives. This phenomenon has made it easier to interact without the constraints of space and time, but on the other hand, it has raised serious issues regarding the protection of individual privacy.

Privacy is a fundamental human right that includes control over personal information and restrictions on sharing personal data with other parties. In the context of social media, these restrictions are increasingly blurred because users often voluntarily share sensitive information, such as location, daily activities, family circumstances, and even economic aspects, without realizing the potential risks that follow (Suharyono, 2020). The data shared is not only consumed by fellow users, but also collected, analyzed, and utilized by digital platforms for commercial and algorithmic purposes.

In addition to privacy issues, the development of digital technology also poses threats to data security and the ethics of information use. The prevalence of data leaks, identity theft, online fraud, and cybercrime shows that digital systems are not yet fully capable of guaranteeing user security (Setiawan, 2021). Society's dependence on digital systems means that technological disruptions, such as system failures or hacking, have a widespread impact on social and economic life, including the banking sector and public services.

Furthermore, the erosion of privacy in the era of social media also has an impact on the sustainability of human social life. Excessive exposure to social media and a culture of unlimited sharing can affect mental health, mindset, and individual resilience, especially among the younger generation. Several studies show that intensive use of social media correlates with increased anxiety, decreased critical thinking skills, and weakened mental resilience (Nasrullah, 2019). This condition poses a serious challenge to the sustainability of human resource quality in the future.

Based on this phenomenon, studies on privacy erosion in the social media era are important for comprehensively understanding the threats posed by digital technology to security, ethics, and the sustainability of human social life.

Problem Formulation

Based on the developing social phenomenon, theoretical basis, and analysis results reviewed in this study, the research problem is formulated as follows:

1. How does the dynamics of social media use contribute to weakening individual privacy protection in the digital age?
2. How does society's dependence on digital technology pose risks to data security as well as social and economic vulnerability?
3. How do social media and digital technology practices raise ethical issues in the management of personal information?
4. How do privacy erosion and technology dependence affect the sustainability of social life and the mental resilience of the younger generation?

5. What strategies can be developed to mitigate the negative impacts of privacy erosion in the face of increasingly massive digital technology developments?

Research Objectives

In line with the research questions, this study aims to:

1. Critically examine the role of social media in accelerating the decline of individual privacy protection.
2. Analyze security threats and systemic risks arising from increasing dependence on digital systems.
3. Identify ethical issues arising from the use of social media and the management of personal data by digital platforms.
4. Examine the impact of privacy erosion and technological dependence on the social sustainability and psychological resilience of the younger generation.
5. Formulate relevant conceptual and policy recommendations to strengthen privacy protection and digital ethics in the modern technological era.

Benefits of Research

The expected benefits of this research are as follows:

- a. **Theoretical Benefits**
This research is expected to enrich academic studies in the fields of social sciences and technology, particularly regarding issues of privacy, digital ethics, and the impact of social media on human life.
- b. **Practical Benefits**
The results of this research can be used as consideration for the public in using social media wisely, as well as a reference for policymakers in formulating regulations on data protection and digital privacy.
- c. **Academic Benefits**
This research can be used as a reference for future researchers interested in studying issues of privacy, digital security, and social sustainability in the modern technological era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Privacy in the Digital Age

Privacy is one of the basic human rights related to individual freedom in controlling personal information. In the classical social context, privacy is understood as the boundary between personal and public space that allows individuals to maintain the confidentiality of certain aspects of their lives. Westin (2015) defines privacy as a person's ability to determine when, how, and to what extent information about themselves is disclosed to others. This definition emphasizes the importance of individual control over personal data as the core of privacy protection.

However, in the digital age, the concept of privacy has undergone significant changes. The development of information technology, particularly the internet and social media, has led to the collection and dissemination of personal data on a large scale, often without the knowledge of the data owner. Simple activities such as uploading photos, tagging locations, or giving app permissions have become sources of continuous data collection. Suharyono (2020) states that digitization has shifted privacy from the personal realm to part of the digital economy, where personal data has commercial value.

These changes show that privacy is no longer just an individual issue, but also a structural issue involving digital platforms, corporations, and state regulations. Without adequate understanding, individuals potentially lose control over their digital identities, making privacy increasingly fragile in modern life.

Social Media and the Erosion of Privacy

Social media is a virtual space that allows individuals to interact, share information, and build digital identities on a large scale. The existence of social media has encouraged the formation of a massive sharing culture, where personal activities are often published openly. Nasrullah (2019) explains that social media has created a new public space that has no clear boundaries between the personal and social spheres, so that what was previously private can now easily become public consumption.

This phenomenon has triggered the erosion of privacy, which is the process of reducing the boundaries of protection for personal information. Many social media users voluntarily share sensitive data such as family circumstances, daily activities, and even economic aspects, without considering the long-term risks. This information is not only accessed by other users, but also by the platform's algorithm system, which stores it in a database.

The erosion of privacy is exacerbated by low digital literacy among the public. Users often do not read privacy policies or understand the consequences of the consent they give to digital platforms. As a result, social media not only functions as a communication tool, but also as a means of data exploitation that has the potential to harm individuals socially, psychologically, and economically.

Data Security and Digital Technology Risks

Data security is a crucial aspect of digital technology use, especially when almost all human activities are integrated into electronic systems. Setiawan (2021) argues that weak information system protection can open the door to data leaks, identity theft, and various forms of cybercrime. This risk increases in line with society's high dependence on digital services.

The integration of various sectors of life, such as banking, education, health, and trade, into digital systems creates systemic vulnerabilities. When technological disruptions occur, whether due to technical errors or cyber attacks, the impact can be widespread and paralyze social and economic activities. This shows that digital security is not only a technical issue but also relates to social stability.

In addition, users' lack of awareness of data security practices, such as using weak passwords and sharing excessive information, also increases the risk. Therefore, data security needs to be understood as a shared responsibility between system providers, the government, and technology users.

Digital Ethics and Social Responsibility

Digital ethics relates to moral principles, values, and norms that govern human behavior in the use of technology. In the digital space, ethics is important because interactions no longer occur directly, but rather through systems and algorithms. Zuboff (2019) explains that the practice of surveillance capitalism has shifted the orientation of technological ethics, where economic interests are often prioritized over the protection of individual rights.

The collection and use of personal data without transparency reflects the weak implementation of digital ethics. Individuals are often not given a fair choice in determining the use of their data. In addition, the practice of flaunting one's personal life on social media also raises ethical dilemmas, as it can trigger social jealousy, crime, and violations of other parties' privacy. Ethical responsibility lies not only with individuals, but also with platform providers and policymakers. Digital ethics is necessary as a foundation for creating a technological ecosystem that is fair, humane, and oriented towards protecting human dignity.

Social Impact and Human Sustainability

Excessive use of social media has serious implications for human social life and sustainability. Continuous exposure to digital content can affect mental health, especially in children and adolescents. Nasrullah (2019) states that the intensity of social media use is associated with increased anxiety, decreased concentration, and weakened critical thinking skills.

In the long term, this condition has the potential to weaken the fighting spirit and mental resilience of the younger generation. Dependence on technology and instant gratification can reduce an individual's ability to face real-life challenges. This poses a threat to the sustainability of human resources in the future.

In addition, the erosion of privacy and social pressure on social media can damage interpersonal relationships and social solidarity. Therefore, wise and ethical management of social media use is key to maintaining a balance between technological progress and the sustainability of human life.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method (library research). A qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to deeply understand complex, contextual, and non-quantifiable social phenomena, particularly those related to privacy erosion in the social media era. According to Sugiyono (2020), qualitative research focuses on the meaning of a phenomenon based on theoretical and empirical perspectives that have developed in society.

The literature study method is used to examine various concepts, theories, and findings from previous studies relevant to the topics of digital privacy, social media, data security, technology ethics, and the sustainability of human social life. Zed (2018) explains that literature study is a research method that relies on written sources as the main data to construct a conceptual framework and scientific analysis. Through this method, researchers can synthesize knowledge from various sources to produce a comprehensive and critical understanding.

Types and Sources of Data

The data used in this study is secondary data, obtained from academic textbooks, reputable national and international journal articles, official agency reports, and other relevant scientific publications. References were selected based on criteria of credibility, topic relevance, and publication recency, with priority given to sources published within the last ten years. The use of scientific sources was intended to ensure the validity and reliability of the data analyzed (Sugiyono, 2020).

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out through systematic literature searches using scientific databases, such as Google Scholar, national journal portals, and international academic publishers. The keywords used included “digital privacy,” “social media,” “data security,” “technology ethics,” and “the social impact of technology.” Each source obtained was then selected to ensure its suitability for the research focus.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique used was descriptive-qualitative analysis, with an emphasis on interpreting meanings and relationships between concepts. This analysis aimed to explain the phenomenon of privacy erosion systematically and contextually without using statistical calculations. This approach allowed researchers to explore the social and ethical implications of digital technology developments in greater depth.

Data Validity

Data validity in this study was maintained through source triangulation, namely by comparing various references from different authors and disciplines. In addition, the researcher also ensured the consistency of the argument and the compatibility between the theory and the findings analyzed. This step was important to increase the credibility and validity of the research results (Sugiyono, 2020).

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social Media as a Trigger for Privacy Erosion

Social media operates on a data-based economic model, where user activity is the main asset that has commercial value. Every digital interaction, from photo uploads, comments, likes, to location data, is recorded and processed by algorithmic systems to build user behavior profiles. This situation has shifted the meaning of privacy from a personal right to a commodity that can be exploited by third parties. Suharyono (2020) states that social media users often do not have full control over the data they share because it is stored and can be reused in the long term.

According to Westin's theory of privacy (2015), privacy is an individual's ability to control when, how, and to what extent personal information is shared with others. This theory is increasingly relevant due to the high penetration of social media, which is not balanced with adequate privacy literacy. People tend to view social media as a personal space, when in fact, structurally, social media is a digital public space. Social media operates on a data-based economic model, where user activity is the main asset with commercial value. Every digital interaction, from photo uploads, comments, likes, to location data, is recorded and processed by an algorithmic system to build a profile of user behavior. This situation has led to a shift in the meaning of privacy, from a personal right to a commodity that can be exploited by third parties. Suharyono (2020) states that social media users often do not have full control over the data they share because it is stored and can be reused in the long term.

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Privacy erosion occurs when individuals lose awareness of the consequences of information disclosure. The massive sharing culture encourages users to display their personal lives in detail, including family activities, home locations, and economic conditions. Low digital literacy causes many users to not understand platform privacy policies, resulting in data use agreements being given without careful consideration (Nasrullah, 2019).

Many social media users upload photos of their homes along with their real-time locations while traveling. This information is then exploited by criminals to find out which houses are empty. Cases like this show that the openness of personal information on social media can eliminate privacy boundaries and increase the risk of crime.

Cases (among the general public) include the phenomenon of flaunting wealth, family activities, and details of homes on social media, which often occur in Indonesia. There are many cases of theft and fraud that originate from information shared openly, such as home locations and travel schedules. This condition shows that individuals have lost control over the flow of their personal information, as explained in Westin's theory, resulting in the gradual erosion of privacy (Suharyono, 2020).

Security Threats and Dependence on Digital Systems

Society's dependence on digital systems has created systemic security risks. Various strategic sectors such as banking, trade, and public services now rely on information technology. When system disruptions occur, the impact is not only technical but also social and economic. Setiawan (2021) explains that data leaks and system disruptions can cause financial losses, public panic, and a decline in public trust in institutions.

Systemic risk theory explains that when a system is widely interconnected, failure at one point can affect the entire system. Rapid digital transformation in the banking and public services sectors increases efficiency, but at the same time increases the risk of system disruption (Setiawan, 2021).

Digital security threats are becoming increasingly serious because interconnected systems create a domino effect. A single point of failure can affect many services at once. This shows that digital security must be understood as part of social resilience, not merely the technical responsibility of system administrators (Sugiyono, 2010).

For example, when digital banking systems experience disruptions or hacking, people cannot conduct financial transactions, make payments, or withdraw funds. This situation has a direct impact on daily economic activities, especially for small businesses and people who are completely dependent on digital services. This case shows that digital system failures can paralyze social activities on a large scale.

Mobile banking service disruptions that have occurred in Indonesia have prevented people from conducting transactions, payments, and fund withdrawals. MSMEs that depend on digital transactions have experienced a decline in daily income. This case shows that dependence on digital systems without risk mitigation preparedness can paralyze economic activity on a large scale, as explained in systemic risk theory (Sugiyono, 2010).

Ethical Dimensions in Social Media Use

The use of social media raises ethical issues related to transparency, fairness, and responsibility. Massive collection of user data is often not accompanied by easily understandable explanations. Zuboff (2019) argues that in the practice of surveillance capitalism, users' personal data is exploited for economic gain, while individuals' rights to privacy are marginalized.

Zuboff (2019), through the theory of surveillance capitalism, explains that user data is collected and used for economic interests without the active involvement of users in decision-making. This practice is evident in the use of user behavior data for digital advertising and content personalization.

In addition, user behavior in displaying their personal lives on social media also has ethical implications. The information shared not only affects oneself, but also other people involved, such as family members or children. Digital ethics are necessary so that users realize that freedom of expression in virtual space must be balanced with social responsibility (Suharyono, 2020).

For example, parents who excessively upload photos of their children on social media without considering the long-term impact on their children's privacy. Such data and digital traces can last a long time and have the potential to be misused in the future. This case shows that digital ethics issues do not only concern adults, but also the protection of vulnerable groups.

Case (MSMEs & digital platforms): MSME actors who utilize digital platforms are often unaware that their transaction data and consumer behavior are also part of the platform's data ecosystem. On the other hand, consumers do not fully understand how their data is used. This shows an imbalance of power between platform owners and users, which raises ethical issues related to transparency and digital justice (Suharyono, 2020).

Implications for the Social and Mental Sustainability of the Younger Generation

Excessive exposure to digital technology and social media affects the sustainability of social life, especially for the younger generation. High intensity of social media use can affect mental health, reduce concentration, and weaken critical thinking skills. Nasrullah (2019) states that dependence on social validation in digital media can increase anxiety and reduce self-confidence in adolescents.

The theory of technology dependence explains that excessive use of technology can reduce an individual's ability to think independently and solve problems conventionally. In the context of education, the presence of artificial intelligence provides convenience, but also poses the risk of dependence (Nasrullah, 2019).

Dependence on technological conveniences also has the potential to reduce resilience and independence. Young people who are accustomed to getting instant solutions through technology tend to be less trained in dealing with complex problems in real life. In the long term, this condition can reduce the quality of human resources and weaken social resilience (Sugiyono, 2010).

Case example (education): Students are increasingly using AI to complete academic assignments. In some cases, analytical skills and resilience decline because the thinking process is replaced by technology. When faced with offline exams or real-life problems, some students show difficulty adapting. This phenomenon shows that technological dependence can weaken the mental resilience of the younger generation, as explained in the theory of technological dependence (Sugiyono, 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study show that the development of digital technology, particularly through social media, has had dual consequences for human life. On the one hand, digital technology facilitates communication, access to information, and efficiency in social activities. However, on the other hand, this development has also accelerated the erosion of individual privacy due to the dominance of data-based economic models and low public awareness of personal information protection.

Social media has been proven to contribute significantly to blurring the boundaries between private and public spaces. The practice of excessive information sharing, without adequate understanding of the mechanisms of data collection and utilization by digital platforms, causes individuals to lose control over their identity and personal data. This condition reinforces the view that privacy is no longer solely a personal matter, but has become a structural issue in the digital ecosystem.

In addition, the increasing dependence on digital systems poses widespread and interrelated security risks. System disruptions, particularly in the banking and public services sectors, not only have technical impacts but also affect social stability and economic activities of the community, including small businesses. This emphasizes that digital security is an important part of overall social resilience.

From an ethical perspective, data management practices that lack transparency reflect weak protection of individual rights and an imbalance in the relationship between digital platforms and users. In addition, user behavior that excessively displays personal life on social media increases the risk of privacy violations and digital crimes, both against oneself and others.

Furthermore, excessive dependence on digital technology and artificial intelligence has an impact on psychosocial aspects, especially among the younger generation. The ease of technology has the potential to reduce independence, resilience, and critical thinking skills, which in the long term can affect the quality of human resources. Therefore, efforts are needed to manage digital technology in a way that focuses on strengthening privacy literacy, digital ethics, and fair data governance so that technological progress remains in line with the sustainability of human social life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these conclusions, this study recommends several strategic steps. First, systematic strengthening of digital literacy and privacy is needed through formal education and public education programs, with an emphasis on social media ethics awareness and personal data management. Second, the government needs to strengthen the implementation of personal data protection regulations through effective oversight mechanisms and increased accountability of digital platforms.

Third, the banking and digital services sectors are advised to improve security systems, risk management, and disruption mitigation preparedness to reduce the social and economic impact of system failures. Fourth, in the field of education, the use of technology and artificial intelligence needs to be directed as

a learning support tool that continues to emphasize the development of critical thinking, independence, and mental resilience in students.

Finally, as users of technology, the public is expected to be more prudent and responsible in sharing personal information in the digital space. Individual awareness, policy support, and ethical commitment from platform providers are key to maintaining a balance between technological progress and the sustainability of human social life in the future.

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