

Let's collaborate: Exploring Library and Information Science lecturers' and students' experience of social media as a collaboration tool through phenomenography

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Abstract:

This research aims to explore variations in the ways Library and Information Science (LIS) lecturers and students experience social media as a collaboration tool at one Indonesian university. The method for this research is phenomenography because this research aims to explore variations of experience. The social media platform that we investigated is a Facebook group. The research data was collected from interviews with seven participants who were either a lecturer or a student at the university and also the member of the Facebook group that was investigated. The findings of this research are presented in two sets: lecturers' experience and students' experience. In the lecturers' experience of the Facebook group, six categories were revealed: Substituting learning management system; Sharing information; Staying connected; Streamlining lecturers' teamwork; Lacking students' participation; and Finding uninformed students. In the students' experience of the Facebook group, six categories were revealed: Staying informed; Sharing information; Staying connected; Substituting learning management system; Feeling unsatisfied with the platform features; and Being passive members. The findings of this research provide insights into variations in the ways Indonesian LIS teaching staff and students experience the Facebook group as a collaboration tool. As the first empirical research explores this phenomenon, this research provides a research base of social media practice to support teaching and learning in LIS education setting in Indonesia. The research findings also have several important practical implications including informing other LIS schools in Indonesia on the social media practice as a collaboration tool in LIS education setting.

Keywords: LIS education, LIS school, Facebook group, Phenomenography study, Indonesia.

Introduction

The use of social media has become an integral part of most people's daily lives. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61), 'social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content'. Social media is increasingly used in higher education context to support teaching and learning, including to facilitate teaching instructions and promote active learning for students (McLoughlin & Lee, 2010; Selwyn, 2010; Tess, 2013). Social media platforms enable students to engage with content, encourage peer learning, promote critical thinking, promote self-directed learning, encourage self-monitoring of learning progress, facilitate a space to interact with lecturers, and promote enjoyable and interactive learning environment (Hamid, Waycott, Kurnia, & Chang, 2015).

The trend of using social media in higher education context is adopted by Library and Information Studies (LIS) schools in Indonesia. Although there is plenty of informal evidence of social media use at Indonesian LIS schools to support their teaching and learning, no empirical research in this area has existed. In this research, we explored lecturers' and students' experience of social media as a collaboration tool to support teaching and learning in LIS Graduate Diploma program at one Indonesian university. The social media platform that we investigated in this research is a Facebook group.

Literature review

Research into social media usage in higher education setting has increased significantly over the past decade. Many researchers have employed various research approaches to explore the phenomenon. Bozanta and Mardikyan (2017) adopted survey method and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to examine the impacts of using social media on students' collaborative learning. Without specifying the platforms, they found that the use of social media promoted better interaction among students and with their lecturers. Interestingly, they also found that the collaborative learning is not significantly affected by this social media mediated interaction. Another quantitative study with the same approach found that there was a positive correlation between social media usage and collaborative learning and students' satisfaction (Al-Rahmi & Zeki, 2017).

Other recent studies used mixed methods such as studies by Chawinga (2016) and Sobaih, Moustafa, Ghandforoush, and Khan (2016). Chawinga (2016) used survey method and thematic analysis to investigate students' experience in using Twitter and blog during their courses. It is suggested that students used social media for their academic activities, such as discussing materials, evaluating their course and performances, and interacting with their peers and lecturers. Sobaih et al. (2016) evaluated the use of social media among academics in Egypt using survey and in-depth interview. It is revealed that Egyptian lecturers mainly used Facebook and WhatsApp as a communication channel with their students, for example, to share academic-related announcements and web links. The researchers also found that the shared-information was transferred in one direction only, from the lecturers to their students.

Given its status as a widely researched subject, studies on the use of social media in higher education institutions (HEI) tend to focus on experiences of either students or academics. This also applied to the research in Indonesian HEI setting. The literature on this topic, however, is still scarce in Indonesia context. Salikin and Tahir (2017) explored how Facebook and WhatsApp are used among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Adopting the quantitative approach, the study found that there was a weak correlation

between the use of social media and students' writing performance. An older survey study conducted by Falahah and Rosmala (2012) examined the use of social networking sites (SNS) among lecturers in several universities. Findings of their research showed similar results with findings in Sobaih et al. (2016) that SNS platforms were mainly used as a notification board for students.

Methodology

This research used phenomenography as the research method. Phenomenography explores different ways individuals experience a specific phenomenon (Marton & Pang, 2008). Phenomenography approach is a method that places emphasis on gaining an in-depth understanding of the specific phenomenon. For this reason, the selection of participants in phenomenography study is typically purposive (non-random) because it is affected by the specific phenomenon under investigation (Åkerlind, 2005). Purposive sampling emphasises on choosing relevant 'information-rich cases' to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002, p. 230).

The participants in this study were chosen based on the study's participant criteria, that is, an LIS lecturer or student of the university who is also a member of the Graduate Diploma program Facebook group. Seven people participated in this study consisted of four lecturers and three students. All the lecturers were female with age range of 30 – 45 years old. Meanwhile, the student group consisted of one female and two males with age range of 20 – 23 years old and were in their third years of study.

The research data were collected from face-to-face interviews with the participants. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia considering participants' first language is Bahasa Indonesia. Seven questions were asked for each participant based on their participant group. **Table 1** below shows the list of the questions asked in the interview.

Table 1 List of questions

Questions for the lecturer group	Questions for the student group
1. How frequently do you open the LIS Graduate Diploma program Facebook group?	1. How frequently do you open the LIS Graduate Diploma program Facebook group?
2. Can you tell me about your experience of using the Facebook group in relation to teaching and learning?	2. Can you tell me about your experience of using the Facebook group in relation to teaching and learning?
3. Have you ever post any information to the Facebook group? What kind of information that you post?	3. Have you ever post any information to the Facebook group? What kind of information that you post?
4. What kind of information are you looking for from the students?	4. What kind of information are you looking for from the lecturers?
5. How do you use the information you find to inform yourself or the teaching team?	5. How do you use the information you find to inform yourself or other students?
6. In your opinion, what do students do well in terms of collaborating with you as a lecturer using the platform?	6. In your opinion, what do lecturers do well in terms of collaborating with you as a student using the platform?
7. How the practice could be improved?	7. How the practice could be improved?

The interviews were transcribed verbatim in Bahasa Indonesia. Iterative cycle of reviewing interview transcripts was applied in data analysis process to identify variations in lecturers' and students' experience of social media as a collaboration tool. This iterative process involves reviewing interview transcripts for several times, comparing similarities and differences, and grouping similar experiences until categories of description were uncovered (Marton & Booth, 1997). It is important to note that these categories of description in phenomenography represent the participants' experience as a collective group rather than an individual experience level (Marton, 1994). Several key quotes from participants were translated into English and included in this paper to convey the message embedded in participants' experience.

Findings

The data analysis revealed six categories from both of the lecturer group and the student group as summarised in **Table 2**.

Table 2 Research findings

Lecturers' experience of the Facebook group	Students' experience of the Facebook group
Category 1: Substituting learning management system	Category 1: Staying informed
Category 2: Sharing information	Category 2: Sharing information
Category 3: Staying connected	Category 3: Staying connected
Category 4: Streamlining lecturers' teamwork	Category 4: Substituting learning management system
Category 5: Lacking students' participation	Category 5: Feeling unsatisfied with the platform features
Category 6: Finding uninformed students	Category 6: Being passive members

Lecturers' experience of the Facebook group

The lecturers' experience of the Facebook group is classified into six categories.

Category 1: Substituting learning management system

In Substituting learning management system, the lecturers used the Facebook group as a learning management system where they uploaded learning resources, posted academic announcements, and asked students to submit their assignments to the Facebook group.

I usually upload the learning resources to the Facebook group before the class or if I have assignments or quiz I also upload it there so that the students have prepared when they attend the class -L2- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Category 2: Sharing information

In Sharing information, the lecturers experienced the Facebook group as a space to share academic- or LIS-related information. Before posting the information to the Facebook group, the lecturers also ensured the information was valid and related.

I mainly shared academic-related information such as class schedule, final grade announcement, internship schedule, and assignment requirement. I also shared faculty announcement, scholarship information, job vacancies, or LIS seminars and conferences. Before I posted the information, I double-checked the information that I shared in the Facebook group are valid and academic- or LIS-related information -L1- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Category 3: Staying connected

In Staying connected, the lecturers used the Facebook group as a quick and easy way to be contacted.

I turn on the notifications setting on my account for the Facebook group so that if there are new information, comments, or questions, I can respond it quickly -L1- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Category 4: Streamlining lecturers' teamwork

In Streamlining teamwork, the lecturers experienced the Facebook group to make teamwork more efficient and effective.

Because we have to upload the learning resources to the Facebook group, so when a lecturer cannot attend the class, the substitute lecturer can easily get the learning resources from the Facebook group without having to email it to them -L4- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Category 5: Lacking students' participation

In Lacking students' participation, the lecturers experienced difficulties in encouraging students to participate actively in the Facebook group.

Honestly, we want our students to participate actively in the Facebook group, just like us, their lecturers. For example, we ask students to upload their assignments there so that other students can give feedback...but maybe they are afraid that their opinions are wrong, so they hesitate to give feedback. It is difficult to ask students to share their opinions -L3- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Category 6: Finding uninformed students

In Finding uninformed students, lecturers sometimes found students who were uninformed although since the beginning of the semester the lecturers had notified the students that all academic-related information would be available in the Facebook group.

We had shared the information in the Facebook group, but sometimes there were uninformed students. They said their mobile phone was broken or did not have enough [internet] data to access the information -L2- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Students' experience of the Facebook group

The students' experience of the Facebook group is classified into six categories that are explored below.

Category 1: Staying informed

In Staying informed, the students experienced the Facebook group to keep up-to-date with the latest information from the lecturers.

Every day I must check the Facebook group, in case there are information on changing class schedule, academic-related announcement, job vacancy, or library seminar that I can join -S1- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Some students admitted that they rarely opened the Facebook group because they were not an active Facebook user. However, they mentioned that they still received the information posted on the Facebook group from a classmate who voluntarily re-shared the information to their class' other communication channels.

Usually, when one of the students in our class finds new information on the Facebook group, they will re-share it to other students through our class' WhatsApp or Line group. [Take] a screenshot [of the information from Facebook group] then re-share it [through the class' WhatsApp or Line group] -S2- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Category 2: Sharing information

In Sharing information, the students experienced the Facebook group as a space to share information with their fellow students and their lecturers.

As a member of the Student Union, sometimes I share the events that we organise, such as an event at the local community library. I upload the activities to the Facebook group so that it gets better exposure -S1- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Category 3: Staying connected

In Staying connected, the students experienced the Facebook group as a quick and easy communication tool to connect with their lecturers and peers. All students mentioned that they were satisfied with the respond speed from the lecturers when they asked questions through the Facebook group.

The [lecturer's] respond is fast. Sometimes the lecturer will respond the question in less than half an hour. When a student asks questions in the Facebook group, the lecturer will respond it quickly -S2- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Category 4: Substituting learning management system

In Substituting learning management system, the students used the Facebook group as a learning management system. The students used the Facebook group to upload their assignments, get the learning resources, and get academic-related information.

We get academic-related information and learning resources from the Facebook group. For example, when we are looking for resources to help us with our assignment, we will look at the provided resources in the Facebook group...sometimes lecturers also ask us to upload our assignment there -S3- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Category 5: Feeling unsatisfied with the platform features

Although all the students noted that the Facebook group has helped them in supporting the teaching and learning, they were also admitted that they were displeased with the decision to use a Facebook group for this purpose due to its limited features. They pointed out the chronological order in Facebook group made it difficult for them to collaborate and find the information in there.

I hope in the future we do not use the Facebook group as a collaboration tool. Except if Facebook has new features to make it easier for users to retrieve information...I think a Facebook group is not a powerful tool [to support teaching and learning], considering the main purpose of Facebook is only to connect and interact with other people on the Internet [not for educational purpose] -S3- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Category 6: Being passive members

In Being passive members, most students mentioned that they were not participating actively in the Facebook group due to various reasons such as not an active Facebook user.

I only access the Facebook group when I must upload assignments there or when a lecturer asks me to upload the learning resources to the Facebook group -S3- (Mulatiningsih & Zuntriana, 2018)

Discussion

The findings from this study provide evidence-based insights into LIS lecturers' and students' experience of social media as part of their collaboration strategy at one Indonesian university. While existing literature available mostly explore either lecturers' or students' experience of social media in higher education setting, our research explores the phenomenon from both of lecturers' and students' experience. As such, the findings are presented in two sets of categories based on the participant group.

There are similarities and differences in the emerged categories from both participant groups. The similar categories emerged are: Substituting learning management system; Sharing information; and Staying connected. Experiencing Facebook group to substitute learning management system and Sharing information in the Facebook group to support teaching and learning align with research findings by Eger (2015), Wang, Woo Huay, Quek Choon, Yang, and Liu (2011), and Meishar-Tal, Kurtz, and Pieterse (2012). Similarly, previous research by Hamid et al. (2015) and Ventura and Quero (2013) noted how students used social media to interact with their lecturers affirmed Staying connected category.

The different categories emerged from both participant groups are: Streamlining lecturers' teamwork; Lacking students' participation; Finding uninformed students; Staying informed; Feeling unsatisfied with the platform features; and Being passive members. Lacking students' participation in the Facebook group, uninformed students, and the students' tendency to be passive Facebook group members echo with previous research by Donlan (2014) who noted that students are not ready for the collaborative learning using Facebook in higher education contexts. It required 'a change in student mind- and skill-sets' to equip them for collaborative learning style using Facebook (Donlan, 2014, p. 572). Similarly, the students' experience of feeling unsatisfied with the Facebook group limited features to support teaching and learning aligns with a study by Wang et al. (2011) particularly on the information structure in a Facebook group that is not organised based on the thread. Likewise, the category Staying informed has been discussed previously in the literature, such as in studies by Meishar-Tal et al. (2012) and Wang et al. (2011). Finally, this research revealed a unique category that has not been explored in existing literature, that is, the lecturers' experience of the Facebook group to streamline lecturers' teamwork. Further research on this topic would be useful to affirm this category.

As the first empirical study exploring variations in the ways Indonesian LIS lecturers and students experience social media as a collaboration tool, this research provides a research base of social media practice in LIS education setting in Indonesia. The research findings also

have several important practical implications. First, it may benefit the LIS school (where this study was taken) on the views of their lecturers' and students' experience of social media to support teaching and learning. It may also inform other LIS schools in Indonesia on the social media practice as a collaboration tool in LIS education setting. Further research in this research topic is needed to be able to gain more understanding of social media use in Indonesian LIS schools context.

Conclusion

This research has revealed new insights of how LIS lecturers and students use social media as a part of their collaboration strategy at one Indonesian university. The findings contribute to the existing literature on variations in the ways LIS lecturers and students experience social media as a collaboration tool. We hope our research will lead to future studies around social media practice in Indonesian LIS higher education context.

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