

Duality of Identity and Intergenerational Authority: Networking and Negotiation Competencies among Indonesian Adolescents

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Abstract

This study examines how networking and negotiation skills manifest as digital communication competencies among Indonesian high school students. With internet penetration reaching 79.5% in 2024 and Generation Z constituting the largest user group at 34.4% (APJII, 2024), understanding how adolescents develop communicative competencies in online spaces has become increasingly urgent. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, this study combines a purposive online survey of Karya Ilmiah Remaja (KIR) students in South Jakarta with in-depth case study interviews of two highly engaged participants. Findings reveal four key results: participants demonstrated critical information-seeking practices reinforced by their KIR research background; they used social media platforms in purposefully differentiated ways for learning, creative expression, and entertainment; they exercised negotiation competence through dual-account identity management and sensitivity to SARA issues; and participatory culture experience had produced a reversal of intergenerational communicative authority, with adolescents educating parents about digital norms. This study contributes to communication scholarship by repositioning networking and negotiation as core digital communication competencies, and by situating Jenkins' framework within a culturally specific Indonesian context.

Keywords: Online Participatory Culture, Digital Communication Competence, Networking Skills, Negotiation Skills, Indonesian Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of internet technology has fundamentally transformed how humans communicate and circulate information, giving rise to a participatory culture in which users are active co-producers of meaning rather than passive receivers (Li, 2010). This shift is particularly pronounced among adolescents: in Indonesia, the APJII (2024) survey reveals internet penetration of 79.5% of the population, with Generation Z constituting the largest user group at 34.4%. Yet this scale of digital engagement does not tell the whole story. Indonesia's national digital literacy index remains at only a moderate level, and the dimensions most consistently underdeveloped are not technical but communicative: the capacity to critically evaluate information, engage constructively across difference, and navigate the social consequences of digital communication (Kominfo, 2023; Limilia et al., 2022). Of Jenkins' (2009) eleven new media literacy skills, it is networking and negotiation that most directly address these communicative deficits — not merely as protective skills but as the competencies that determine how

adolescents build knowledge, relate to others, manage identity, and participate as social actors in mediated communities.

Yet high levels of digital access do not automatically translate into digital communication competence. Indonesia's national digital literacy index stood at only 3.65 out of 5.0 in 2023, remaining in the moderate category despite years of growing internet penetration (Kominfo, 2023), and Generation Z adolescents consistently show limited capacity for critical information evaluation and source verification (Limilia et al., 2022). This gap is fundamentally a communication problem: digital environments are not neutral channels but complex communicative spaces where meaning is socially constructed, norms are negotiated, and identities are performed. Navigating these spaces requires higher-order communicative skills — critical synthesis, cross-cultural awareness, and reflective self-regulation — that heavy platform use alone does not produce.

Online participatory culture, as theorized by (Jenkins, 2009), provides a productive framework for understanding both the conditions that give rise to this gap and the competencies needed to address it. Jenkins conceptualizes participatory culture as an environment characterized by low barriers to creative expression, strong community support for individual contributions, informal mentorship between experienced and novice participants, and a sense of meaningful social connection through shared practice. In this framework, digital participation is not merely a behavioral phenomenon but a cultural one, it shapes how adolescents learn, create, communicate, and construct identities in relation to others. Jenkins argues that meaningful participation in this culture requires a specific set of new media literacy skills, which he identifies as eleven in number: play, simulation, performance, appropriation, multitasking, distributed cognition, collective intelligence, judgment, transmedia navigation, networking, and negotiation.

The urgency of these competencies is further heightened by two developments that have reshaped Indonesian adolescent digital communication. First, the COVID-19 shift to online schooling introduced institutional supervision into students' personal social media spaces, prompting many adolescents to create dual accounts — one public and image-managed, one private for unmonitored creative expression. This practice, common among a majority of Indonesian adolescents (Haigrid, 2018), reflects a sophisticated communicative response requiring precisely the networking and negotiation competencies this study examines. Second, the rise of cancel culture in Indonesian social media has raised the stakes of online participation: a poorly framed post can trigger swift social consequences (Velasco, 2020), demanding from adolescents an awareness of audience diversity and a disposition toward reflective self-regulation before and during digital communication.

Previous studies on participatory culture and digital literacy among Indonesian adolescents have largely focused on general literacy levels (Limilia et al., 2022), platform-specific behaviors such as TikTok and Instagram use (Purboningsih et al., 2023), or the effects of social media on psychological wellbeing. Few have examined networking and negotiation specifically as digital communication competencies, as skills that shape not just what adolescents do online but how they communicate, relate, and constitute themselves as social actors in participatory digital environments. This study addresses that gap. By focusing on two high school students in South Jakarta as case studies embedded within a broader mixed-methods design, it seeks to illuminate how networking and negotiation skills develop through online participatory culture and what their development means for adolescents' communicative practice and identity in today's social media landscape.

The objective of this study is to explore how networking and negotiation skills develop and are applied in the digital communication practices of Indonesian adolescents, particularly in the context of social media engagement, identity management, and peer interaction. Among the findings this study seeks to illuminate is a phenomenon that is both unexpected and theoretically significant: the emergence of a reversal in intergenerational communicative authority, in which adolescents immersed in online participatory culture develop digital communication competencies that exceed those of their parents, and actively deploy those competencies to educate and guide family members in navigating social media. This reversal challenges conventional assumptions about the direction of digital socialization in families and points to the deeper transformative potential of participatory culture as a site of communicative development. The findings are expected to contribute theoretical insight to communication studies by enriching the conceptualization of Jenkins' framework within an Indonesian cultural context, and to offer practical recommendations for educators, families, and curriculum developers seeking to cultivate genuinely communicative digital competencies in adolescents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online Participatory Culture and Adolescent Communication

Participatory culture, as defined by Jenkins (2009), is characterized by relatively low barriers to creative expression, strong community support for individual contributions, and informal mentorship structures in which knowledge flows from experienced to novice members. This cultural formation emerged from the affordances of Web 2.0 technologies, which enabled users to shift from passive consumption to active co-production of media content (Li, 2010). Jenkins (2009) identifies five core dimensions of participatory culture: affiliations (membership in online communities), expressions (creative production), collaborative problem-solving, circulation (shaping media flows), and connections (linking formal and informal learning). Taken together, these dimensions constitute a new kind of informal learning environment that Jenkins and colleagues describe as affinity spaces, digital contexts in which individuals choose what to learn, how to participate, and with whom to collaborate (Gee, 2004).

In their subsequent collaborative work, Jenkins et al. (2015) revisit and extend this framework for a more fully networked era. They argue that participatory culture can no longer be understood as a property of specific platforms or communities in isolation, but must be examined as a set of practices that unfold across networked social connections. It connecting peer communities, civic spaces, and creative production in ways that are increasingly intertwined. Crucially, Jenkins et al. (2015) emphasize that the benefits of participatory culture are not evenly distributed, meaningful participation depends not only on access to technology but on the social, communicative, and critical skills that allow individuals to navigate networked environments with agency and purpose. This updated framework reinforces the central argument of the present study that networking and negotiation are not peripheral competencies but foundational ones, whose uneven development among adolescents has real consequences for the quality and equity of their digital participation.

For adolescents, participatory culture offers developmental opportunities that formal educational settings cannot easily replicate. Social media platforms allow young people to experiment with identity, form peer relationships, and develop self-expression skills in conditions of greater autonomy and lower evaluative pressure than schooling provides (Purboningsih et al., 2023). Research by (Gil-Quintana et al., 2020) demonstrates that active participation in online communities correlates with increased creative productivity and cross-cultural awareness among secondary school students. More recent studies in

the Indonesian context confirm that while Generation Z adolescents are highly active on social media platforms including Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, their capacity to critically evaluate information and manage their digital presence varies considerably (Limilia et al., 2022). This variation points to the importance of distinguishing between access to participatory culture and meaningful competence within it. A distinction that this study addresses through its focus on networking and negotiation as specific communicative skills.

Networking as a Digital Communication Competency

Networking, in Jenkins' framework, refers to the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information across distributed digital environments. At its core, it involves understanding how information is generated, filtered, circulated, and how one's own communication acts participate in that circulation. Teenagers who possess this skill are described by Jenkins (2009) as capable of navigating the changing world of information with critical awareness, paraphrasing rather than copying, and understanding the social and cultural contexts of different information sources.

This conceptualization aligns with broader frameworks of digital communication competence. Research by Dennen et al. (2023) on networked knowledge activities among young people demonstrates that while adolescents are skilled at informal social networking, their capacity for purposive information-seeking and critical synthesis that particularly on professional or academic platforms, remains underdeveloped. This distinction between social and epistemic networking points to an important tension in how adolescents use digital environments: social networking may be instinctive and pleasurable, but the kind of critical information networking Jenkins (2009) envisions requires deliberate cultivation. The concern is not merely academic: adolescents who lack epistemic networking skills are more susceptible to misinformation, more likely to reproduce unreliable content, and less equipped to build the kind of credible digital knowledge practices that both Jenkins (2009) and Jenkins et al. (2015) identify as essential for meaningful participation in networked public life.

In the Indonesian context, this tension is well documented. Limilia et al. (2022) find that despite daily internet use among over 90% of Generation Z respondents, digital literacy scores in critical evaluation and information synthesis remain relatively low. Purboningsih et al. (2023) further observe that adolescents rely on platform familiarity and peer recommendation rather than systematic source evaluation. This pattern confirms that networking competence is shaped by educational practices, family guidance, and community participation — factors that vary considerably across Indonesia's social and geographic contexts.

Networking competence extends beyond information-seeking. It also governs how adolescents build relationships across communities, distribute creative work to reach appropriate audiences, and manage their digital footprint. Jenkins and Bertozzi (2008) argue that networking skills enable adolescents to leverage online communities for creative and entrepreneurial purposes, transforming private hobbies into public communicative practices. Jenkins et al. (2015) reinforce that the ability to circulate one's work through the right channels is itself a communicative skill — one that shapes how content is received, what relationships it generates, and what learning it produces.

Negotiation as a Digital Communication Competency

Negotiation, as Jenkins (2009) defines it, involves the ability to travel across diverse communities, discern and respect multiple perspectives, and understand and follow alternative norms. In online environments characterized by cultural diversity and ideological difference, this skill is essential for constructive communication. Social media

platforms routinely bring adolescents into contact with perspectives, values, and norms that differ from their own. Sometimes productively, and sometimes in ways that generate conflict, misunderstanding, or exposure to misinformation.

The communicative dimension of negotiation is evident across three distinct contexts. First, it governs how adolescents respond to diversity of opinion and cultural difference within online communities. Second, it shapes how adolescents evaluate the credibility of information from sources reflecting different perspectives and ideological commitments. Third, negotiation determines how adolescents manage conflict whether through avoidance, direct engagement, or collaborative resolution. Research in cross-cultural digital communication confirms that the ability to adapt one's communicative style based on cultural context is a core component of effective online interaction (Chaudhary, 2024). In a country as culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse as Indonesia, this dimension of negotiation carries particular weight: adolescents who participate in online spaces frequently encounter not only global cultural diversity but also the layered internal diversity of Indonesian society itself, including the sensitivity surrounding SARA (Suku, Agama, Ras, Antargolongan—Ethnicity, Religion, Race, and Intergroup) issues that pervade public discourse.

Jenkins et al. (2015) deepen the understanding of negotiation by situating it within the challenge of connected learning across difference — engaging productively with peers whose backgrounds, values, and communicative norms differ from one's own. They argue that participatory culture, at its most generative, creates conditions for genuine communicative exchange that builds empathy across difference, but only when participants have developed the negotiation competencies to engage constructively rather than retreat into ideological homophily. This is especially relevant in Indonesia, where the diversity of online communities creates both rich opportunities for cross-cultural negotiation and significant risks of communicative breakdown.

In the contemporary social media environment, negotiation skills have become particularly critical in relation to cancel culture — a phenomenon in which individuals who violate perceived community norms are publicly condemned and symbolically excluded from digital spaces. Velasco (2020) identifies cancel culture as a direct product of participatory culture's dynamics of community formation and norm enforcement. For adolescents, whose sense of social belonging is contingent on peer approval, the threat of cancellation creates significant communicative risk. Navigating this environment requires sophisticated negotiation competencies: anticipating how messages land across diverse audiences, recognizing cultural and ethical sensitivities, exercising reflective self-regulation, and recovering from conflict when it occurs. Without these competencies, adolescents are communicatively ill-equipped for the complex, high-stakes social media environments they inhabit daily.

Research Question: How do networking and negotiation skills manifest as digital communication competencies within the online participatory culture of Indonesian high school students?

METHODS

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative case study interviews in order to provide both breadth and depth in understanding how networking and negotiation skills operate within adolescents' digital communication practices. The mixed-methods design follows the explanatory sequential model described by Creswell (2003), in which quantitative data is collected first to establish the general landscape of participatory culture practices among respondents, and qualitative data is subsequently gathered to explain, contextualize, and elaborate those

patterns through detailed participant narratives. This sequential logic is particularly appropriate for a study of communicative competence, where survey data can identify the presence or absence of relevant behaviors and dispositions, but only in-depth interview can reveal how those competencies are understood, enacted, and experienced by the adolescents themselves.

In the first phase, a quantitative online survey was distributed via Google Form to a purposively selected group of high school students in South Jakarta who were members of Karya Ilmiah Remaja (KIR), a student scientific research extracurricular organization. Criterion-based purposive sampling (Creswell, 2003) was employed: KIR membership was selected because these students engage in structured, inquiry-driven practice — critical source evaluation, cross-platform synthesis, and peer knowledge production — that maps directly onto Jenkins' (2009) conceptualization of networking and negotiation as active communicative competencies. KIR's organizational emphasis on peer mentorship and collaborative knowledge production closely parallels the affinity space structures Jenkins (2009) identifies as conditions for participatory culture competencies to develop most fully. Access was facilitated through the researcher's professional network. Given the exploratory, qualitative-dominant design, the survey functioned primarily as a screening and mapping instrument rather than a tool for statistical generalization, and was administered to fewer than 50 participants.

The survey employed a combination of Likert-scale and open-ended questions to assess three primary variables derived from Jenkins' (2009) framework. The first variable, online participatory culture, was measured through respondents' reported involvement in sharing creative work online, membership in digital communities, and frequency of content production and circulation across social media platforms. The second variable, networking culture, was measured through respondents' self-reported practices of information-seeking, source evaluation, content synthesis, and information distribution including whether respondents paraphrased or cited sources when using online material for academic or creative purposes. The third variable, negotiation culture, was measured through respondents' reported capacity to understand and respect differences of opinion, navigate conflict in online communities, and exercise ethical judgment in decisions about what to post and share. South Jakarta was selected as the research site because it represents an urban, digitally well-resourced environment where adolescents have had continuous exposure to internet use since early childhood. Conditions that maximize the observable presence of participatory culture practices and ensure that the study population is sufficiently embedded in online communities to make networking and negotiation competencies meaningfully assessable.

In the second phase, qualitative case study interviews were conducted with two high school students purposively selected from the survey pool on the basis of demonstrating the highest levels of active engagement across multiple online participatory culture dimensions. Both participants showed consistent patterns of regular creative content production, cross-community networking, active information-seeking, and self-reported awareness of source credibility and community norms. These characteristics made them the most information-rich informants for an in-depth exploration of how networking and negotiation competencies develop and operate in practice. This criterion-based purposive selection strategy follows Creswell (2003), who argues that in explanatory sequential mixed-methods designs, qualitative cases should be chosen not for statistical representativeness but for their capacity to provide the deepest possible illumination of the phenomenon under study. Selecting the most engaged participants serves this purpose: it allows the study to examine networking and negotiation competencies at their most developed and observable, generating insights that can subsequently inform

understanding of how these competencies might be cultivated more broadly among adolescents at different levels of participatory engagement.

The interviews were conducted in an in-depth, semi-structured format, guided by an interview protocol organized around the three core concepts of the study: online participatory culture, networking skills, and negotiation skills, as operationalized through Jenkins' (2009) framework in *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. Interview questions explored how participants described their everyday social media practices, how they made decisions about information sourcing and content sharing, how they navigated disagreement or conflict in online communities, and how they understood and managed their digital identities including the dual-account practices identified in the survey phase. One participant, a student at SMAN 8 Jakarta, is quoted directly in the findings section, providing an illustrative first-person account of how these competencies manifest in daily communicative life.

Data integration followed a two-stage mixing procedure consistent with the explanatory sequential design (Creswell, 2003). In the first stage, survey data were analyzed to produce a frequency-based descriptive profile of participatory culture behaviors, which then served as analytical scaffolding for the qualitative phase. Interview questions were constructed specifically to probe and explain patterns from the survey: where the survey revealed high rates of dual-account maintenance, interviews explored the communicative reasoning behind this practice; where strong source-evaluation habits appeared, interviews examined how participants experienced and narrated them. In the second stage, quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to assess convergence and elaboration, following Creswell's (2003) logic in which qualitative data actively explain and contextualize quantitative patterns rather than merely supplement them. Data analysis followed a narrative analysis approach (Berger & Luckmann, 1996), which attends not only to what participants do but to how they narrate and give meaning to their communicative practices. To establish trustworthiness, source triangulation was applied across survey responses, interview transcripts, academic literature, and secondary data (APJII, 2024; Salkind, 2010), and peer debriefing with communication studies colleagues was conducted to subject emerging interpretations to critical external scrutiny.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Adolescent Participation in Online Communicative Spaces

This study was conducted with high school students living in an urban environment with adequate digital infrastructure, where participants have been familiar with the internet and social media since they were kids. Consistent with APJII (2024) data showing that Gen Z constitutes the largest group of Indonesian internet users at 34.4%, these students represent a cohort for whom digital communication is not a supplementary activity but a constitutive dimension of daily social life. Participants reported first encountering digital platforms through family-introduced games requiring social media accounts, and transitioning to personal account ownership during junior high school. This trajectory aligns with Jenkins' (2009) assertion that schools and families play a critical role in shaping online participatory culture not merely by providing technological access, but by cultivating the ethical and perceptual frameworks through which adolescents interpret and engage with digital environments.

A defining feature of Indonesian adolescent digital practice is the widespread maintenance of dual social media accounts. Based on a 2018 survey by haigrd.id, 60% of Indonesian adolescents reported maintaining an alter account, and both participants in this study did so. The first, public-facing account was used for institutional purposes — submitting schoolwork, entering competitions, and projecting academic credibility. The

second, commonly known as the “qwerky” or alter account, served as a space for unfiltered creative expression and peer community participation free from institutional scrutiny. This practice reflects what Marwick and boyd (2011) theorize as a response to context collapse — the condition in which a single post becomes simultaneously visible to multiple audiences with incompatible expectations. Consistent with Petronio’s (2002) Communication Privacy Management theory, the alter account functions as a communicative privacy boundary, enabling adolescents to calibrate self-disclosure to specific relational contexts. It operates, in Goffman’s (1959) terms, as a backstage region: a communicative space where the performance demands of front-stage identity management are temporarily suspended. This dual-account practice represents the simultaneous application of both networking and negotiation competencies — directing content to the right communities while calibrating self-presentation to distinct audience expectations.

Significantly, however, the two participants managed this duality differently. One participant kept their alter account fully private, limiting visibility to a small circle of trusted peers from the same online community. The other left theirs semi-public, reasoning that broader exposure could attract collaborative partners and potential entrepreneurial opportunities within their creative field. This difference in approach reflects different calibrations of what Velasco (2020) identifies as the tension between expressive freedom and reputational risk in online participatory culture, and in both cases, the decision required a deliberate communicative judgment about audience, context, and consequence. This dual-account practice is therefore not merely a behavioral quirk but a communicative strategy that reflects the practical application of both networking and negotiation competencies simultaneously: networking, in directing content to the right communities and managing one’s digital presence strategically; and negotiation, in calibrating self-presentation to the differing norms and expectations of distinct audiences. Online participatory culture, as Jenkins (2009) argues, primarily occurs outside formal educational environments. While school platforms impose assessment-bound forms of participation, social media enables teenagers to engage freely in what Vasudevan & Campano (2009) describe as multimodal, youth-driven literacy practices that resist the constraints of formal evaluation. The dual-account phenomenon crystallizes this tension: the formal account represents mediated participation shaped by institutional expectations, while the alter account represents the more authentic form of participatory culture Jenkins envisions characterized by voluntary engagement, peer support, and self-directed creativity.

Networking as Communicative Practice: Information, Creativity, and Cross-Cultural Connection

The findings of this study demonstrate that adolescents who are actively engaged in online participatory culture develop networking competencies through their everyday communicative practices rather than through deliberate instruction. Networking manifests in three primary dimensions: information-seeking and critical evaluation, creative distribution, and cross-cultural relationship building. Notably, participants’ background as members of the Karya Ilmiah Remaja (KIR) extracurricular appeared to strengthen their networking competencies beyond what might be expected of average high school social media users. Their experience with academic inquiry, structured information-seeking, and peer collaboration within KIR created a disposition toward critical source evaluation that translated directly into their online participatory practices.

In terms of information-seeking, participants demonstrated a level of epistemological awareness that went beyond casual platform use. Rather than relying on anonymous blogs, unverified social media posts, or algorithmically recommended content, they described a consistent practice of cross-referencing information through Google Scholar, institutional websites, and peer-reviewed journal sources before using material for schoolwork or creative projects. One participant described distinguishing between "just scrolling content" and "actually looking for something", a distinction that maps directly onto Jenkins' (2009) differentiation between passive and active networked knowledge practices. Participants also reported that this critical sourcing habit was actively reinforced by KIR activities, where evaluating the credibility and relevance of academic sources was a core skill. As such, the school-based extracurricular environment played a facilitative role in consolidating networking competencies that were first developed through informal online participation. An example of the formal-informal learning synergy Jenkins (2009) advocates, and which Jenkins et al. (2015) identify as a hallmark of the most generative forms of participatory culture.

The distribution of creative work through social media represents a second key dimension of networking competence. Participants reported using Instagram and YouTube to share creative work with communities organized around shared interests, reaching audiences well beyond their immediate offline social circles. One participant described having their work shared and commented on by users from other countries as transformative — not only motivationally, but in terms of understanding how creative work circulates in networked environments. Consistent with Chau (2010), positive community reception spurred deeper investment in creative skills and communicative reach. The gamers-turned-public-figures phenomenon, referenced by participants as a cultural touchpoint, exemplifies how networking competence can transform a private hobby into a public communicative practice with real social and economic implications (Bertozzi & Jenkins, 2007), a trajectory participants themselves were actively navigating.

Networking also facilitated cross-cultural relationship-building of a kind that offline environments could not support. Through collaborative projects, comment exchanges, and sustained community membership, participants developed communicative relationships with users from diverse national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. They described learning not only about different creative conventions and aesthetic traditions but also about different ways of approaching disagreement, responding to criticism, and expressing enthusiasm or support, all of which enriched their communicative repertoire in ways that extended beyond their social media use into their everyday interpersonal communication. Research on Indonesian adolescents' social media use confirms that online friendship networks contribute to feelings of social connectedness and exposure to diverse perspectives (Purboningsih et al., 2023), and the present findings suggest that for KIR-engaged adolescents with well-developed networking competencies, these connections reach a depth and breadth that goes significantly beyond casual platform interaction.

Negotiation as Communication Practice: Difference, Credibility, and Digital Risk

Negotiation competencies were evident in participants' approaches to managing three interrelated communicative challenges: cultural and ideological difference, information credibility, and the social risks associated with public digital presence. Across all three dimensions, participants' responses were characterized by a combination of strategic awareness, ethical sensitivity, and reflective self-regulation that distinguishes communicatively competent digital participants from those who engage online without such frameworks.

In encounters with cultural and ideological difference, participants reported a general disposition toward disengagement rather than direct confrontation — unfollowing offensive accounts, muting contentious threads, and preserving community relationships over winning arguments. This approach reflects the indirect, harmony-preserving conflict styles associated with Southeast Asian communicative contexts (Chaudhary, 2024). Participants demonstrated particular sensitivity to SARA issues (Suku, Agama, Ras, Antargolongan — Ethnicity, Religion, Race, and Intergroup relations), describing careful self-censorship around content touching on these dimensions. Significantly, this sensitivity was experienced not as an external constraint but as communicative responsibility. For Indonesian adolescents, SARA awareness carries a weight absent from Western research contexts: it is rooted in a national history of interethnic and interreligious conflict, institutionalized in the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (Undang-Undang ITE), and constantly activated in Indonesia's algorithmically amplified social media environment. SARA-aware self-censorship thus functions as a localized form of what Jenkins (2009) conceptualizes as ethical negotiation: an internalized disposition toward reflective self-regulation across lines of social difference. This finding constitutes a substantive contribution to the cross-cultural extension of Jenkins' framework, differentiating Indonesian negotiation competence from its Western-theorized counterparts. The most engaged participants, however, moved beyond avoidance: they engaged constructively with different viewpoints, collaborated with creators from different cultural backgrounds, and treated unfamiliar perspectives as assets for collective intelligence.

A particularly significant manifestation of negotiation competence was observed in participants' approach to information credibility. In the context of Indonesia's complex information environment, where misinformation, hoaxes, and polarizing content circulate widely, the ability to critically evaluate sources and resist manipulation is a vital communicative skill. Participants demonstrated a nuanced awareness of the risks posed by anonymous content and unverified claims. They described a practice of cross-referencing information across multiple platforms before sharing or acting on it, and expressed discomfort with the idea of amplifying content whose provenance they could not verify. This sensitivity reflects a form of prospective negotiation, an anticipatory assessment of how content will be received and what consequences its circulation might produce that Jenkins (2009) identifies as central to ethical digital communication and that Jenkins et al. (2015) connect to the broader challenge of building trustworthy knowledge practices in networked participatory culture.

The dual-account practice also illustrates negotiation competence in action at the level of identity management. By maintaining separate accounts with distinct audiences, tones, and community affiliations, adolescents engage in an ongoing communicative performance that requires constant calibration of what to share, with whom, and in what register. One participant described a deliberate decision to keep their alter account private after witnessing a peer's creative work attract unwanted attention and critical commentary from a broader audience than intended, an experience the participant interpreted as a lesson in the social consequences of context collapse. This account illustrates that negotiation competence, in the context of dual-account management, is not simply about self-expression but about understanding the communicative architecture of different digital spaces and managing one's participation within each accordingly. As Velasco (2020) notes, the risk of cancel culture in which a post or comment that violates perceived community norms triggers swift and public condemnation makes this kind of anticipatory negotiation not merely prudent but essential for sustainable online participation.

A notably rich and unexpected finding emerged in participants' accounts of how their participatory culture experiences had reshaped communicative authority within their families. As Adinda, a student at SMAN 8 Jakarta, observed: "Now, parents only know how to use social media and it's easy to be provoked by comments, especially mothers on Facebook, where I usually explain if not all posts need to be commented on. It is better for us to avoid conflict on social media than to join the debate." This captures a reversal of the traditional intergenerational knowledge hierarchy: adolescents immersed in participatory culture have developed digital communication competencies that exceed those of their parents, and actively deploy them to guide family members. Jenkins (2009) anticipates this as a structural consequence of participatory culture, in which informal peer-driven learning produces competencies that formal education and parental socialization have not yet caught up with. This study provides a specific illustration of that dynamic in the Indonesian family context.

Implications for Digital Communication Competence

Taken together, these findings suggest that networking and negotiation are not merely instrumental media skills but are fundamentally communicative competencies that shape how adolescents relate to information, communities, identities, and others in mediated environments. The development of these competencies is not uniform: it is shaped by a complex interplay of factors including the affordances of specific social media platforms, the educational practices of extracurricular organizations such as KIR, the guidance provided by families, and the cumulative communicative experience accumulated through participation in diverse online communities. The finding that KIR membership appears to strengthen networking competencies in particular by cultivating habits of critical information evaluation and structured peer collaboration has practical implications for how schools and extracurricular programs might be designed to support digital communication development.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined how networking and negotiation skills manifest as digital communication competencies among Indonesian high school students engaged in online participatory culture. Drawing on Jenkins' (2009) framework, extended by Jenkins, Ito, and boyd (2015), and employing a mixed-methods design combining a purposive survey of KIR students in South Jakarta with in-depth case study interviews, the findings demonstrate that adolescents who are actively embedded in online participatory culture develop meaningful communicative capacities that extend well beyond casual social media use.

Four specific findings merit emphasis. First, participants demonstrated networking competence through critical information-seeking practices — cross-referencing sources, preferring academic and institutional content over anonymous material — a competence notably reinforced by KIR membership, suggesting that inquiry-oriented extracurricular environments cultivate the critical networked knowledge practices Jenkins (2009) envisions. Second, participants used social media in purposefully differentiated ways: YouTube for learning, Instagram for creative expression, and TikTok for entertainment, reflecting sophisticated awareness of how different platforms serve different participatory functions. Third, participants demonstrated negotiation competence through dual-account management, SARA sensitivity, harmony-preserving conflict strategies, and anticipatory calibration of content for diverse audiences. Fourth, participatory culture had produced a reversal of intergenerational communicative authority, with adolescents actively educating family members about misinformation risks, online etiquette, and the social consequences of impulsive digital engagement.

The limitations of this study — a small qualitative sample drawn from a well-resourced urban context with KIR-engaged participants — necessarily constrain generalizability. Future research should extend to smaller cities and rural areas to examine how infrastructural and institutional factors shape competency development across a broader range of Indonesian adolescents, and larger quantitative samples would enable more robust conclusions across demographic variables. Schools, families, and curriculum developers are encouraged to treat networking and negotiation not as elective additions to digital literacy programs but as foundational communicative competencies essential for safe, critical, and meaningful participation in social media environments.

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