

## Building Social Capital Online During the COVID-19 Transition in Indonesia

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### Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic not only causes health problems but also affects the level of social trust. Low social trust occurs in the public sphere and transforms in the digital space. This situation was then deemed necessary to rebuild social capital. This study aims to prove that there are still opportunities in times of crisis where social capital can be re-formed, depending on how social networks initiate voluntary activism on social media. This study used a quantitative approach. Data were collected from Twitter using Ncapture. The data including information on COVID-19 cases were later analysed using the Nvivo 12 Plus software. This study found that there is a possibility and opportunity that low social trust caused by the COVID-19 pandemic can still be restored in times of crisis, at least by utilizing social media as a social networking center. Social networks on Twitter slowly shape cooperative behavior and social trust, and influence collectivities in rebuilding social capital.

**Keywords:** Social capital; social trust; government involvement; online social networks; Twitter

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### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is a threat that has caused chaos in many countries, including Indonesia (Olivia, Gibson, & Nasrudin, 2020). Some impacts caused by the pandemic are health issues, the economy, political polarization, and social anomie (Young & Bleakley, 2020; Kuipers, Mujani, & Pepinsky, 2020). This situation then contributes to low social and political trust in the community (Schraff, 2020). Low socio-political trust appears in the public sphere and is transformed in digital spaces such as social media (Limaye et al., 2020). Many activities have been done by utilizing internet-based information technology. Activities that rely on the internet during the pandemic have also ultimately

changed public attitudes and sentiments from the public sphere to social media (Shahi, Dirkson, & Majchrzak, 2021). Low public trust needs to be reviewed to anticipate the increasing cases and restore the social situation.

The first COVID-19 case in Indonesia drew various responses on social media. This situation has made social media users give negative responses and sentiments to government authorities (Isnain, Marga, & Alita, 2021). The pessimistic view was shown through hashtags, quotes, captions, and other types of information (Chandrasekaran, Mehta, Valkunde, & Moustakas, 2020; Rahmanti, Ningrum, Lazuardi, Yang, & Li, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic and the negative sentiment also indicate that social capital has

faded, characterized by low trust and the emergence of apathy within the social community. The fading of social capital then affects public attitudes towards government policies in handling COVID-19 cases. Government policies are considered slow, not severe, and especially during the pandemic. There were also allegations of corruption cases (Mietzner, 2020; Prakasa, Hariri, Nuriyah, Asis, & Salam, 2021). This complexity hinders efforts to reduce cases of coronavirus infection in Indonesia. This situation is then deemed necessary to resolve again by building social capital in online social networks, hoping that online social capital will transform in other public spaces and affect the cooperative interest of the community in creating social stability.

In this situation, active participation from many parties is needed, including community involvement in general, especially on social media. Community participation is considered to contribute to efforts to reduce and minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic becoming increasingly severe (Khongsai et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2020). Participation can now be done in social networks by utilizing the internet to increase the possibility of broader community participation (Ahmed, Cho, Jaidka, Eichstaedt, & Ungar, 2020). Online involvement by relying on the internet also influences communication patterns and social engagement to engage in common goals (Kennedy et al., 2021). Online participation can be done using social media platforms (Chaves-Montero, Relinque-Medina, Fernández-Borrero, & Vázquez-Aguado, 2021; Jennings, Suzuki, & Hubbard, 2021). In social media, there is a diffusion of information that can affect the attitudes of its users (Xiong, Liu, & Cheng, 2017). From this description, a more cooperative and participatory activism is needed to deal with the pandemic and go through the COVID-19 transition period by considering social media.

This study focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, affecting the low level of public trust, especially in online social networks such as Twitter. The purpose of this study is first to explore how Twitter in this situation helps to legitimize the growth of online social trust. Social trust is an essential aspect of democratic life, especially in the COVID-19 pandemic situation (Kye & Hwang, 2020; Balog-Way & McComas, 2020; Siegrist & Bearth, 2021). Changes strongly influence

social trust in the views of individuals or social groups towards certain social events and circumstances (Delhey & Newton, 2003). If there is low trust in social life, this condition will affect the pattern of participation or public involvement in the community (Fletcher & Park, 2017). Participation has various meanings and has been researched to see how such participation can transform and enter the digital or online pattern. Involvement in digital or online concepts is considered to reach less active social groups and affect their level (Geise, Heck, & Panke, 2020). In addition, the second purpose of this study also seeks to explore the possibility of bridging social capital in online social networks.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### *Social Capital and Social Trust in Crises*

Social capital has increasingly become popular in various disciplines with various meanings. However, in general, social capital can be interpreted as a situation in which social relationships can then be mobilized to initiate a collective action (Adler & Kwon, 2002). The term capital began to be known in the late 1980s. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) introduced capital in *The Forms of Capital*, focusing on conditions in meaning and value influenced by resources or capital (Bourdieu, 2018). Bourdieu defined social capital as all resources, both actual and potential, related to relationships within a social community. Coleman argued that the notion of social capital is determined by its function (Coleman, 1988). Social capital can be used as legitimacy for social actions (Rayamajhee & Bohara, 2021; Shin, 2021). Social capital takes time to accumulate as a potential capacity to generate profits within communities and social networks (Bourdieu, 2018; Lőrincz, Koltai, Győr, & Takács, 2019; Dressel, Johansson, Ericsson, & Sandström, 2020).

Coleman emphasized two aspects of critical social structure in facilitating social capital. First, a social structure that creates a social network can make everyone interconnected to impose obligations and punishments on everyone. The second is a social organization used to achieve common goals (Coleman, 1988). Putnam (1993) considered social capital as a value of mutual trust in the life of society and the state. The pillars are networks, norms, and social trust that encourage collaboration in social life for the

common good (Putnam, 1993; Son & Feng, 2019). Putnam mentioned three fundamental reasons. First, social networks allow for coordination and communication that can foster mutual trust among community members. Second, trust has positive implications in social life. The third is building sustainable social relationships. Thus, this relationship initiates trust in diverse communities and influences attitudes and behavior (Dinesen, Schaeffer, & Oslashunderskov, 2020; Gereke, Schaub, & Baldassarri, 2018). Currently, social capital is considered a necessary prerequisite for good and effective governance (Nunkoo, 2017; Dressel et al., 2020). Social capital has been linked to governance systems focusing on social innovation and new paradigms (Secco & Burlando, 2017).

Meanwhile, in a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, individual behavior impacts prevention guidelines instructed by government authorities, such as social distancing to avoid further spreading infectious diseases or slow their spread. However, some individuals and other social groups tend to panic and lose confidence within their communities (Sailer, Stadler, Botes, Fischer, & Greiff, 2021; Faour-klingbeil, Osaili, Al-nabulsi, Jemni, & Ewen, 2021). In other crises, more real distrust is shown to government authorities, and this issue creates significant difficulties in assessing the model of community involvement. Social groups most affected by the crisis will lose trust in many people (Torrente, Caïs, & Bolancé, 2019; Baharuddin et al., 2021). During periods of crisis, maintaining social trust positively affects performance and sustainability in social life (Mazumder, 2020). Strengthening trust in social life in a pandemic is vital, creating the potential to change public participation in building social capital again. Social capital consists of trust and the relational aspects. The relational element emphasizes relationships and social networks (Borgonovi & Andrieu, 2020).

Social capital provides hope and benefits during crisis scenarios. Communities with high social capital are considered more effective than other communities with low social capital to participate in responding and acting (Pitas & Ehmer, 2020). This condition also forms an essential argument that high social capital in the social community will have more opportunities to respond and adapt to the current outbreak (Wu, 2021). Solid social community tends to

help bridge participation, knowledge, interaction, and expectations (Kim, Kim, & Lee, 2020). In Indonesia, the pandemic harms social trust. Hence, in certain situations, it tends to influence the response and behavior of the community to be more cooperative.

The COVID-19 pandemic and negative sentiment also show that social capital has faded, marked by low trust and the emergence of apathy in social communities. In addition, there are several other examples of cases where a crisis situation contributed to negative sentiment and the waning of social capital such as the global pandemic caused by the deadly influenza virus in 1918 called the Spanish Flu. The resulting impact has long-lasting effects on individual behavior and is evidence that the pandemic is likely to have permanent consequences in terms of social trust (Aassve et al., 2021). This trend shows that the effects of the pandemic affect the decline in the level of social trust. Low social trust also affects social capital. The following are the proposed hypotheses.

H1: The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to affect social trust and damage social capital.

H2: Social capital in a crisis will have a positive impact on social engagement.

#### *Social Media Activism Bridging Online Social Capital*

Activism on social media is considered to impact the democratization process in many countries, including Indonesia. This situation is based on communication and information technology to facilitate interaction between individuals and social groups (Gazali, 2014; Lim, 2017). Sociological use of social media can be helpful in social activities and interactions (Ince, Rojas, & Davis, 2017; Murthy, 2012). Social media in social interaction also has a function that can reduce inequality within the community because it is a microblogging platform that facilitates increased exchange, activism, and collectivism through disseminating information (Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Huang et al., 2020). Collectivism can generally be understood as a companion or part of feelings, beliefs, intentions, and behaviors in harmony with solidarity, concern, and sensitivity shown in social communities (Hui, 1988). Furthermore, collectivism is not directed only in public spaces or in public

places but is also transformed. Along with the massive use of social media, this collectivism is then changing online in a much more different culture (Holmes, Balnaves, & Wang, 2015; Evers, Greenfield, & Evers, 2021).

Social media creates awareness about COVID-19 in many countries (Msugheter, 2020). Several social communities and users of social media platforms globally have utilized social media to respond to the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as indicated by the density of interaction and information flow in it (Al-Dmour, Masa’deh, Salman, Abuhashesh, & Al -Dmour, 2020; Obi-Ani, Anikwenze, & Isiani, 2020; Drouin, McDaniel, Pater, & Toscos, 2020). However, the flow of information and the density of interactions can also lead to conflict, fear, and hatred (Lynch, Freelon, & Aday, 2017). The social media ecosystem is also plagued by misinformation, polarization, false and hateful content, and the emergence of distrust of social institutions (Donovan & Boyd, 2021). Hence, social media also has a negative side and impacts on the response and behavior of social media users. There have been many findings of the potential adverse effects of social media on people’s attitudes (Klein & Robison, 2020). Even in a crisis, it can also create tension in social media networks influenced by the spread of information and cause a shift in social trust, indicated by low perceptions and participation (Mirbabaie, Bunker, Stieglitz, Marx, & Ehnis, 2020).

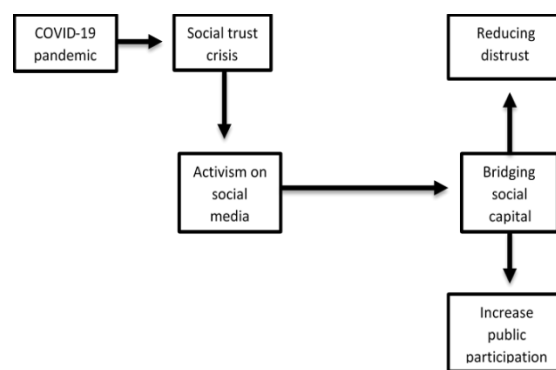
However, social media can still bridge social capital relying on activism and connectivity within online social networks (Tiwari, Lane, & Alam, 2019). The positive impact of social media will offer new ways for profitable online networks within the community, and this situation will slowly affect social trust (Townsend, Wallace, Smart, & Norman, 2016; Norbutas & Corten, 2018). It is then considered to be a way for social capital facilitated by digital technology to accommodate the process of social participation and engagement (Mandarano, Meenar, & Steins, 2010; Wen & Wei, 2018; Kim et al., 2020). It also depends on the user’s perspective in understanding the information spread on social media (Recuero, Zago, & Soares, 2019). The frequency of using social media also helps bridge social capital (Moshkovitz & Hayat, 2021). Social media also needs to consider communication patterns in

disseminating information. Thus, communication patterns can reduce distrust, and on the other hand, can create and maintain social trust (Ng & Kemp, 2020). The following are the proposed hypotheses:

H3: Socialmedia has the opportunity to influence public participation and awareness in reducing the impact of the crisis.

H4: Activism on social media has a positive relationship to bridge online social capital in crises.

The hypotheses proposed regarding online social capital during the COVID-19 pandemic will help bridge social participation and trust in the transition period. The hypothetical models are as follows:



**Figure 1.** The Hypothetical Model Proposed to Build Online Social Capital in the Transition Period of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Based on the previous studies above, this research is quite different from previous research, especially in examining social capital by understanding online interactions and public attitudes. There are still very few related studies that elaborate on social capital, trust, and activism using social media, especially in analyzing cases and phenomena of the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The purpose of this study is also expected to reduce the research gaps that previously existed.

**Material and Methodology**

This study used quantitative methods with descriptive content analysis. The research subjects included Twitter social media users. Social media platform such as Twitter was chosen because it is quite popular today and is used to channel various responses,

participation, relationships, and engagement in the network (Kim et al., 2020). So that it can also help in answering the research hypothesis. The Twitter data collection follows the development of cases in Indonesia since the first confirmed case of Covid-19 was detected in early March 2020. The Twitter data collection ended on June 13, 2021. The data obtained on Twitter was selected based on Twitter Search with hashtags (#) such as #Covidindonesia and other related information. The selected data allowed for further exploration and analysis. The data collection used the Ncapture for Nvivo feature found in Google Chrome. The collected data was then transferred to an analysis tool, namely the Nvivo 12 Plus Software. Nvivo 12 Plus Software was chosen because the software provides space for researchers to store, manage and analyze data as well as to maximize the stages of data visualization.

Furthermore, the data collected in the Nvivo 12 Plus Software was classified on the data and coded based on Word Frequency Query and Sentiment Analysis. Word Frequency Query helped to list the most frequently found words and hashtags. Sentiment Analysis identified expressions of sentiment related to the COVID-19 issues. Sentiment analysis is divided into two parts, namely negative and positive. Automatically, the use of Nvivo 12 Plus can also reduce the tendency of researchers in research results that are not reliable or invalid. Reliability and validity are determined automatically after the results of data coding are achieved, with a significant percentage. Thus, in the process, the percentage of items that have a low weight value is not displayed in the results of data coding. The results of data coding found a lot of data, so that only relevant data was taken, including:

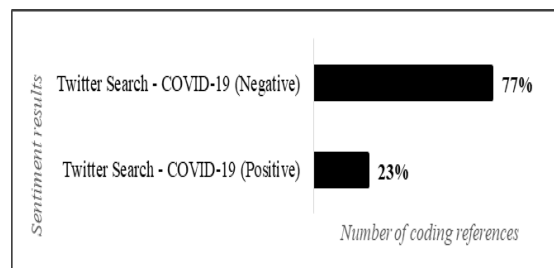
#VaccineSuccess  
 #NationalVaccination  
 #Healthprotocoldiscipline #againstCOVID19  
 #Vaccinationasrecovery #stayhome  
 #Economyrise #wearamask #maintainadistance  
 #SpiritoRestoringIndonesia #let'svaccinate  
 #Indonesiaprogressing #washinghands  
 #ourtogether #Wecan #againstscovid #staysafe.

A visualization stage followed the results of the coding in a graph or tables.

**Result and Discussion**

The analytical sentiment shown on social media such as Twitter has influenced social

trust during the COVID-19 pandemic period in Indonesia. The results of the research based on a Twitter search found significant presentations, namely 77% (negative) and 23% (positive). These data indicate low online social trust during the pandemic.



**Figure 2.** Low online social trust due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Processed by researchers using Nvivo 12 Plus (2021)

The aspects that affect the low social trust are heavily influenced by issues and topics of debate within the Twitter network.

**Table 1.** Topics and issues that affect the low social trust on Twitter

Issues and Topics	References (%)
Vaccine	31,14
Health	17,46
Government performance	17,22
Worship activities	16,74
Public services	6,60
Unity	4,45
Education	3,22
Economy	2,92
Social assistance	0,14
Corruption	0,11
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 shows the discussion of topics that affect the low public trust on Twitter regarding COVID-19 in Indonesia. Researchers took the data and then transferred it to the Nvivo 12 Plus software. The data that has a low weight is not displayed because it is considered to have no significant effect. Significant data is then coded by mentioning keywords that tend to influence the topics. Vaccine is the most influential topic, with 31.14%, followed by health (17.46%), government performance (17.22%), restrictions on worship activities (16.74%), public services (6.60%), unity (4.45%), education (3.22%), economy (2.92%), social assistance (0.14%), and corruption (0.11%).

This study also finds data that is assessed as a form of activism on the Twitter network in

an effort to rebuild social trust and social capital through activism in the form of hashtags.

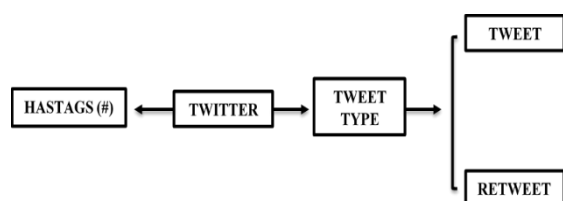
**Table 2.** Activism on Twitter with the hashtag

Hastags	References (%)
#VaccineSuccess	26,7
#NationalVaccination	15,6
#Healthprotocoldiscipline	13,6
#againstCOVID19	11,4
#Vaccinationasrecovery	8,6
#stayhome	6,5
#Economyrise	4,9
#wearamask	1,9
#maintainadistance	1,9
#SpiritofRestoringIndonesia	1,4
#let'svaccinate	1,3
#Indonesiaprogessing	1,1
#washinghands	1,0
#ourtogether	1,0
#Wecan	1,0
#againstcovid	1,0
#staysafe	1,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Processed by researchers using Nvivo 12 Plus (2021)

Table 2 shows that there are models of activism carried out by social media users (Twitter) during the pandemic period. This kind of activity is carried out through the use of hashtags to maximize the distribution of information to influence the attitudes of other users on Twitter to be actively involved in reducing the number of infection cases due to the coronavirus.

The data in Tables 1 and 2 also shows that many tweets include two or more hashtags, and all of them are retrieved and then transferred to the Nvivo 12 Plus analysis tool. The data is then filtered by determining the relevant calculated weights so that the weights of the low scores that are assessed are not displayed. Thus, the data categorization follows the results of the coding on the analysis tool used.

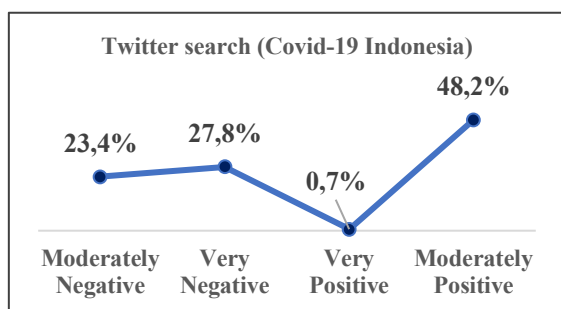


**Figure 3.** Social engagement against COVID-19 on Twitter

Source: Processed by researchers using Nvivo 12 Plus (2021)

The data in Figure 3 is the response of Twitter users in rebuilding social capital which

is characterized by the online social engagement that is connected with other users to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The network disseminates information, narratives, campaigns, and movements through tweets and retweets by utilizing hashtags to increase the spread of information quickly and widely. Apart from other general users, the dissemination of this information also involves official government Twitter accounts and official accounts of other institutions. These accounts are involved in online social networks to educate the public on social media to engage in common interests in reducing the number of cases. As for some samples of the official Twitter account, namely @Jokowi (President of Indonesia), @divisihumaspolri (The Indonesian National Police), @humaspolda (Regional Police), @BNPB (National Disaster Management Agency), @BPBD (Regional Disaster Management Agency), @Kemenkesri (Ministry of Health), and @kemmoinfo (Ministry of communication and information).



**Figure 4.** Restoration of social trust online  
Source: Processed by researchers using Nvivo 12 Plus (2021)

Figure 4 shows a trend of recovery in online social trust levels on Twitter during the transition period. This situation is the result of the efforts made by social media users to reduce the number of cases by maximizing the use of social media.

Social capital online characterized by networking, communication, and social trust in the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has a positive impact on the decline in COVID-19 caseload from the highest number of 14,518 cases in January 2021 to 9,868 cases on June 13, 2021. The involvement of Twitter social media users has influenced responses on the public social network to engage in common interests to reduce the number of cases. This involves not only social media users in general but also the government in making maximum use of Twitter for information dissemination and education. Information and education that have an influence in the form of hashtags are seen as quite positive in ensuring the fast and broad diffusion of information so that it affects the responses of other users. The topics that previously affected the decline in public trust in online social networks tended to improve.

The use of social media also legitimizes the social network on Twitter to engage in developing discourse. In these online social networks, social media users gave responses and opinions to one another and gave rise to diverse activism. In the transition period from 2020 to 2021, activism in online social networks tended to be positive. It gave birth to cooperative and collective movements in supporting the government or other authorities to reduce the COVID-19 cases in Indonesia by taking a maximum advantage of information and engagement on Twitter through tweets, retweets, and hashtags. Social media such as Twitter has become the media of choice by many people to express various opinions,

sentiments, and distribution of information in real-time (Wang, Can, Kazemzadeh, Bar, & Narayanan, 2012; Shin, Jian, Driscoll, & Bar, 2018). In Asia, especially Indonesia, social media has various purposes, primarily political and civic engagement (Baulch, Flew, & Li, 2019). Social networking sites like Twitter are important channels for communicating and developing new forms of social coexistence based on connectivity and interaction during a pandemic. This also influences social capital (Castro-Martinez et al., 2021).

The activism in social media has formed a social network in bridging social capital. This social capital can also create participation and influence social trust in online social networks. The activism shown in online social networks by utilizing social media aligns with what was described previously. Social media can contribute to bridging the social capital. It is highly dependent on activism and connectivity within online social networks that form social bonds (Tiwari et al., 2019; Calderón Gómez, 2020). Social capital in a crisis due to the pandemic has a positive impact on the pattern of social involvement in reducing the number of infection cases due to the coronavirus as is apparent from a decrease in the COVID-19 caseload from the highest number of 14,518 cases in January 2021 to 9,868 cases on June 13, 2021 (Satgas Covid-19, 2021). After all, the decrease in COVID-19 caseload is only temporary and the results are not comprehensive.

However, in times of crisis caused by a pandemic at least this shows the positive influence of social media in disseminating information, strengthening social ties, engagement, participation, and improving social trust. This study is also in line with the results of previous research where social media could facilitate awareness about COVID-19 (Msugheter, 2020). This study contributes to examining the hypothesis that social media can reduce the number of COVID-19 cases by making maximum use of Twitter to bridge social capital as an essential pillar for initiating social trust and participation during the pandemic transition period in social networks. This study also provided an important argument that there is a hope that social capital can be rebuilt in times of crisis. This depends on how social media users form a collaborative social network. In contrast, previous research showed that in times of crisis, social media could cause

fear and hatred or other research results related to COVID-19 revealed that social media is a means to express social panic (Lynch et al., 2017; Naeem, 2021). This study found that social media could still contribute positively.

The results of this study indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic generally contributes to low social trust. In this situation, the use of social media continues to increase due to the implementation of social applications in the public sphere. The use of social media Twitter in the pandemic situation is slowly justifying the growth of online social capital which is characterized by the response, activism, and formation. This affects the pattern of public participation in reducing the number of COVID-19 cases. Social media can be an alternative to increase public participation and awareness in reducing the impact of the crisis. Activism on social media has a positive relationship to bridge online social capital in a crisis. Thus, this study assesses that the model in this hypothesis has a tendency that allows the emergence of alternatives in social capital development in the COVID-19 pandemic situation, and this is highly dependent on social media users.

### Conclusions

The pandemic has an impact on decreasing social trust, but the impact can still be reduced by using social media and involving social media users collectively. Social media proves to be able to initiate the emergence of a participatory attitude even though it requires more time and energy to disseminate information that can influence other public responses to engage in joint action on online social networks. This opportunity not only relies on social media users but also requires the attachment of official government accounts in the network to strengthen the flow of relationships in the transition period.

The findings offered essential ideas for social capital studies by analyzing the role of social media. In addition, the results were also crucial in policymaking, especially for government authorities in making maximum use of social media to distribute information in online social networks related to efforts and education during the COVID-19 pandemic. This condition needs time to bridge social capital and trigger public awareness to be more cooperative. The limitations of this study lie in the research method in which data was only

tested and analyzed in a certain period of time and the limited number of samples which were only taken in Indonesia. This restricted the researchers to present the results of the research with a more in-depth analysis. The limitations may encourage further researches by conducting investigations by assessing the wider period of the COVID-19 pandemic and conducting comparative studies in other countries.

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