Dynamics of Multiple Identity and Self-Presentation of Generation Z Students in Jakarta on Social Media

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Article Info	Abstract
	The purpose of this research is to examine how Jakartan Generation Z students utilize cross-platform social media and the dynamics of numerous identities and self-presentation techniques. Data was gathered through in-depth interviews with eight informants and social media account content analysis using a qualitative approach and case study methodology. Through the use of several accounts, content curating techniques, and the division of responsibilities between front and back stages, the results demonstrate that students actively control their digital identities. This occurrence demonstrates the applicability of Goffman's theory of dramaturgy in elucidating the performance of digital identities in relation to the audience and social milieu. There is a notable contrast between online and offline representations, as seen by the unique finding of one informant who portrayed himself as outgoing on social media but remained introverted in real life. According to the study's findings, Generation Z students' digital identities are strategic, dynamic, and reflective, with the goal of upholding both their public persona and their right to free speech. Opportunities for additional research to examine psychological and professional aspects in a wider context are presented by the study's limitations regarding the quantity and range of informants.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Generation Z students in the digital age face new challenges in building and managing their identities. The presence of social media not only opens up a wide space for expression, but also requires them to present different versions of themselves according to diverse contexts and audiences. This phenomenon shows that identity is no longer singular and stable, but rather multiple and constantly negotiated in the digital space (Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Vignoles et al., 2011). The concept of multiple identities explains that individuals can have and display different social identities depending on the social situation, values, and groups they belong to (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). In the context of Generation Z, this diversity of identity is increasingly evident through online behaviors such as the use of main and second accounts, or through private features such as close friends on Instagram (Afifah & Kuntari, 2025). This practice shows how individuals try to maintain a balance between their authenticity and public image in the virtual world.

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In the context of Generation Z, this diversity of identity is increasingly evident through online behaviors such as the use of main and second accounts or private features such as *close friends* on Instagram (Afifah & Kuntari, 2025). Supporting this, Anggiraksa et al., (2025) found that the majority of Gen Z users actively manage more than one Instagram account, with their *second account* functioning as a private space for emotional expression, contrasting with the more curated and professional *main account*. This practice demonstrates how Gen Z users consciously separate their audiences and identities to balance authenticity and social expectations. Thus, the phenomenon of multiple accounts represents not only a digital trend but also a strategic identity management mechanism shaped by social norms, audience control, and the pursuit of self-expression and personal branding in the online environment.

Furthermore, Goffman (1959) theory of self-presentation states that individuals behave like actors who present a certain image on the "front stage," while more authentic expressions of self are usually shown on the "back stage." In the digital context, this is reflected in how Generation Z students build attractive and socially acceptable personas in front of their online audience, while maintaining their privacy and authenticity in closed spaces. Previous research shows that this strategy is a form of social adaptation used by social media users to manage impressions and maintain psychological balance in digital interactions (Agustini et al., 2022; Sari & Prabowo, 2021). The high intensity of social media use also reinforces this phenomenon. Based on the APJII survey (2023), internet users in Indonesia are dominated by Generation Z with the highest level of digital activity on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and other social media. This condition makes social media not only a means of entertainment, but also the main space for Generation Z to dynamically form, display, and negotiate their digital identities. Thus, this study seeks to examine how Generation Z students in Jakarta construct multiple identities and manage their self-presentation in the digital space through the lens of Goffman's dramaturgy theory.

The explosion of communication technology in the last two decades has radically changed the face of human interaction. Social media is no longer just a space for entertainment or a means of sharing information, but has transformed into the main arena where self-identity is displayed, negotiated, and even put at stake. Each individual is now not only a recipient of messages, but also a producer and curator of their own image (prosumer) who constantly strives to manage their impression in front of a diverse audience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Marwick & Boyd, 2011). This phenomenon is even more significant among Generation Z, a group that has grown up alongside the internet, social media, and smart devices (Prensky, 2001; Twenge, 2017). As digital natives, they not only use online spaces as a complement to their lives, but also as the main arena for building relationships, seeking recognition, and designing their social and personal identities (Buckingham, 2008; Turkle, 2011).

In Indonesia, the dynamics of technological development can be seen from data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2023), which shows that 78.19% of the population is connected to the internet, with young people being the dominant users. Students, as part of Generation Z, are at the forefront of utilizing social media. They use it not only for daily communication but also to build academic networks, expand their social circles, and present a self-image that is expected to be relevant to various audiences (Nugroho & Syarif, 2020; Putri, et al., 2022). In reality, the dominance of digital space in everyday life also raises new issues. Identity no longer exists in a single, consistent form but appears in various versions according to the surrounding social context. This is

the core issue of this study: how Generation Z students in Jakarta manage their multiple identities, present themselves on various platforms, and play different roles like actors on stage.

Generation Z tends to view identity as fluid and layered, unlike previous generations who tended to view identity as more stable (Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2011; Zhao et al., 2008). Social media allows them to present different personas depending on the context, audience, and platform used. This situation has given rise to the phenomenon of multiple identity, which is a condition in which individuals present more than one version of themselves to adapt to social norms and the expectations of a particular audience (Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Turkle, 2011). The phenomenon of multiple identities cannot be separated from the concept of self-presentation. Since Goffman (1959) introduced his theory in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, social interaction has been viewed as a performance in which individuals act as actors who present a certain image to meet audience expectations. In the context of social media, students as part of Generation Z not only display their identities for personal needs, but also for academic, professional, and social purposes (Ellison et al., 2006). Research by Agustini et al., (2022) confirms that students' self-presentation strategies in the digital space are still closely related to Goffman's dramaturgy, in which they manage their impressions like actors on the front stage and back stage.

The phenomenon of digital identity is also closely related to changes in the communication paradigm. While in the era of traditional communication, identity was primarily formed through face-to-face interactions, in the digital era, identity is increasingly negotiated through algorithmic mediums, online networks, and platform norms (Boyd, 2014; Marwick, 2013). The identity displayed on social media is not a simple reflection of the self, but rather a social construction influenced by interactions with the audience, algorithmic logic, and prevailing cultural values (Marwick, 2013; Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2011). In the context of Indonesian students, this phenomenon is even more interesting. One strategy that has emerged is the use of main accounts and second accounts. A study by Afifah & Kuntari (2025) found that students often use their main accounts to build an academic or professional image, while second accounts are used as a space for more authentic personal expression. Ardelisma et al., (2023) also emphasized that this strategy is a form of adaptation by students in facing public expectations and the need to express their personal identity. This shows how the digital identity of Generation Z students has become a complex arena of negotiation.

However, the intensity of social media use does not always have a positive impact. Social pressure to present an ideal image often encourages excessive self-curation practices. This condition can trigger psychological problems such as anxiety, stress, and even identity crises (Oberst et al., 2017; Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Phenomena such as flexing, self-image, and excessive personal branding strategies reflect how Generation Z students deal with identity negotiations that are not only social but also psychological.

Academic studies on Generation Z's digital identity have grown rapidly in the last decade. There are at least three major groups of relevant research. First, research on self-presentation on social media. Ellison et al., (2006) show that social media provides space for individuals to control the information they display more selectively than in face-to-face interactions. Zhao et al., (2008) added that online profiles often display the ideal self rather than the real self. (Vogel et al., 2014) reinforced this finding by explaining that social comparison on social media can have significant consequences for self-esteem and psychological well-being.

Second, research on multiple identities in digital spaces. Roccas & Brewer (2002) explain that social identity is complex and allows a person to hold more than one identity

simultaneously. Marwick & Boyd (2011) introduce the concept of context collapse, which is a condition where various audiences from different backgrounds mix in one digital space, so individuals must adjust how they present themselves. Afifah & Kuntari (2025) found that the use of second accounts is one of the tangible forms of digital identity management strategies among students.

Third, research on the impact of social media on mental health and social life. Oberst et al., (2017) studied the phenomenon of fear of missing out (FoMO), which drives compulsive social media use and has an impact on psychological stress. Twenge & Campbell (2018) confirmed that excessive social media use correlates with increased levels of anxiety and depression in adolescents. In Indonesia, Putri et al., (2022) found that students feel pressured to always present themselves positively, which has implications for their self-esteem and life satisfaction.

A number of studies consistently show that social media plays an active role in shaping students' identities and digital communication strategies. Ulfa et al., (2023) show that digital communication strategies through social media directly shape the image of educational institutions while influencing the experience of students as the main audience. These findings confirm that students' interactions with institutional content help shape their academic identities and expand their social roles in the digital space.

Rahmadani et al., (2025) found that self-presentation practices on social media always depend on interactions with the audience and platform logic. They emphasize that individuals actively display a formal and educational image in the public sphere (front stage), while maintaining their personal side in the private sphere (back stage). These results show that self-presentation strategies are adaptive, as users negotiate their identities according to the demands of the situation and the characteristics of the platform used.

Agustini et al., (2022) prove that dramaturgical theory remains relevant in explaining how individuals manage impressions in various social contexts. The study highlights how people display different identities in formal and informal situations as a strategy to maintain their self-image. This pattern is similar to the phenomenon of Generation Z students who separate their professional persona on their main account and their personal expression on a second account to manage multiple identities in the digital space.

Overall, these three studies show that social media functions as a performative arena where Generation Z students actively construct, negotiate, and present their identities. This dynamic underscores that multiple identities and self-presentation must be understood as complex social practices, shaped by audiences, platform logic, and the surrounding cultural context.

Previous research has indeed made valuable contributions, but this study actively fills a gap that has not yet been addressed. First, rather than focusing on a single platform such as Instagram or TikTok (Ardelisma et al., 2023), this study explains across platforms how Generation Z students manage their identities in digital spaces, so that the dynamics of self-representation are seen more holistically (Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2011). Second, while many previous studies have been stuck in a quantitative approach that merely measures the relationship between variables such as social media usage intensity and life satisfaction (Putri, Rahmawati, et al., 2022; Rahmawati & Wibisono, 2022; Sari & Prabowo, 2021), this study consciously chooses a qualitative approach to explore students' subjective experiences narratively. Thus, this study not only produces numbers but also presents a contextual understanding of how digital identities are constructed and negotiated. Third, international studies tend to generalize the experiences of Generation Z without considering the local context. In fact, the digital identity of Indonesian students is shaped by a combination of collectivist cultural values, religious norms, and the influence of globalization. Hofstede et al., (2010) show that Indonesia's cultural collectivism encourages

students to be cautious in presenting themselves in digital spaces, in contrast to Western cultures that are more individualistic. Therefore, this study explicitly places the Indonesian context, particularly Jakarta, as an important space for understanding this phenomenon.

Based on the above explanation, this study presents novelty in three main aspects. First, this study does not limit itself to one platform but maps the dynamics of Generation Z students' identities across platforms. Second, this study uses a qualitative case study approach that allows for more in-depth narrative exploration. Third, this study emphasizes the context of Jakarta as an urban space that represents the center of education, culture, and technology, making the results more relevant in explaining the dynamics of Generation Z students' identities in Indonesia. In line with this, this study has the main objective of analyzing how Generation Z students in Jakarta construct and manage multiple identities and implement self-presentation strategies on cross-platform social media. More specifically, this study seeks to answer three core questions: (1) how do Generation Z students manage their multiple identities on social media?; (2) how do they implement self-presentation strategies according to different contexts and audiences?; and (3) why do Generation Z students choose social media as the main space to represent their identities?

This research has two important benefits. First, the theoretical benefit, which is to enrich the literature on digital communication, particularly that related to dramaturgy, multiple identities, and self-presentation among Generation Z students in Jakarta. This study is expected to reinforce the findings of previous studies by Agustini et al., (2022); Rahmadani et al., (2025); Ulfa et al., (2023), while also presenting a new perspective in the study of students' digital identities. Second, practical benefits, namely that this research can be a reference for academics, communication practitioners, and policy makers in designing digital literacy strategies, educational policies, and social interventions that are relevant to the needs of students in the digital era.

Thus, the selection of the topic regarding the dynamics of multiple identities and self-presentation of Generation Z students in Jakarta on social media is not merely following academic trends, but is driven by the need to understand a phenomenon that is highly relevant both academically and practically. Academically, this research addresses a gap in studies that has been neglected, especially in Indonesia. Practically, this research contributes significantly to efforts to strengthen students' digital literacy capacity. Therefore, this research was chosen because it is able to provide new insights and significant benefits for academics, practitioners, and the wider community.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore in depth the experiences of Generation Z students in constructing multiple identities and conducting self-presentation on cross-platform social media (Yin, 2018). This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal subjective meanings and complex social dynamics in the context of digital communication. The research was conducted in Jakarta, with eight informants selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) active Generation Z students aged 18–24 years, (2) active users of more than one social media platform, and (3) residing in Jakarta. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face and via Google Meet, with a duration of 30–60 minutes per session. Questions focused on digital identity management practices, self-presentation strategies, and the use of primary and secondary accounts. In addition to interviews, social media content analysis was conducted to strengthen understanding of the informants' communication behavior and identity representation.

Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019), with stages of transcription, data condensation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014),

coding, categorization, theme identification, and interpretation using Dramaturgy theory (Goffman, 1959b) as well as the concepts of Multiple Identity (Roccas & Brewer, 2002), and self-presentation. This process allowed the findings to be analyzed in depth and systematically. To maintain data validity, this study used source triangulation techniques (Creswell & Poth, 2018), comparing the results of interviews, content observation, and supporting literature. This technique strengthens the credibility of the data and minimizes researcher bias. All data were recorded, transcribed, and anonymized with codes (I1–I8) to maintain the confidentiality of the informants.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1.Research result

The results of this study were obtained through in-depth interviews with eight Generation Z students in Jakarta who actively use cross-platform social media. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on variations in age, study program, and patterns of digital platform use. This variation is important because students' experiences in constructing multiple identities and implementing self-presentation strategies are greatly influenced by the personal and socio-cultural contexts in which they interact. Recent research confirms that young people, especially students, develop fluid and layered digital identities according to different platform contexts and audiences (Putri, Rahmawati, et al., 2022; Rahmaandi et al., 2025).

All informants in this study showed high intensity in the use of social media, especially Instagram and TikTok, which function as a front stage in displaying their public identities. These findings are in line with the study by Ulfa et al., (2023), which emphasizes that social media has now become a performative arena, where students strategically display their academic and social images to build credibility. Meanwhile, WhatsApp, second accounts, and limited features such as close friends are more often positioned as a backstage, a place for more intimate personal expression. This reinforces the findings of Agustini et al., (2022), that students separate their public and private personas as a strategy to manage audience pressure and avoid context collapse.

Additionally, the emergence of LinkedIn use among some informants indicates a shift in orientation toward professional identity. This phenomenon is consistent with the findings of Nugroho & Syarif (2020), which show that students in urban areas have begun to use social media not only for entertainment but also as a professional portfolio and a means of self-development. Thus, the digital identity of Generation Z students in Jakarta appears to be fragmented yet strategic, where each platform is utilized according to its norms, logic, and audience.

To facilitate understanding, the results of this study are organized into two main sections. The first section presents a summary table of informants' identities along with a thematic table of coding results. The second section presents the core findings of the study, which consist of: (1) managing multiple identities through the use of multiple accounts, (2) content curation and impression management strategies as a form of self-presentation, (3) dramaturgical practices in distinguishing social roles on the front stage and back stage, and (4) the implications of cross-platform use in building and representing the digital identities of Generation Z students in Jakarta.

Table 1. Informant Identity

Informant	Age	Study Program	Domicile	Main Platform Used
I1	23	Communication Studies	South Jakarta	Instagram, Tiktok, and WhatsApp
I2	22	Communication Studies	Central Jakarta	Instagram, Tiktok, and WhatsApp

I3	18	Computer Engineering	South Jakarta	Instagram, Tiktok, and WhatsApp
I4	21	Communication Studies	East Jakarta	Instagram, Tiktok, and LinkedIn
I5	22	Economics Education	East Jakarta	Instagram and Tiktok
I6	22	Communication Studies	East Jakarta	Instagram, Tiktok, and WhatsApp
I7	22	Communication Studies	North Jakarta	Instagram, Tiktok, and LinkedIn
I8	21	Engineering and Computer Science	North Jakarta	Instagram, Tiktok, and LinkedIn

After presenting a summary of the informants' identities, the next step is to describe the results of the interview data coding. The findings represent the dynamics of Generation Z students' digital identity management, especially in the context of multiple identities and self-presentation. Previous research shows that the digital identity of Generation Z is fluid and layered, so their self-representation strategies often depend on the context of the platform and the intended audience (Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2011; Rahmaandi et al., 2025). Thus, the data from this study not only describes a general phenomenon but also shows variations in experiences among informants in managing their online identities.

To organize the complexity of these findings, the analysis process was carried out by repeatedly reading the interview transcripts to find patterns of answers relevant to the research focus. The informants' responses were then coded and grouped into categories with similar meanings to produce main themes. This procedure is in line with the thematic analysis method, which emphasizes the identification of patterns of meaning through the stages of coding, categorization, and thematization (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Table 2. Summary of Findings (Indicators & Classification)

Informant	Multiple Accounts (Yes/No)	Reasons for multiple accounts	Content Curation	Front stage / back stage (role play)	Main Motivation
I1	Yes	"The first account is more about branding, the second account is more random, you can share your feelings, laugh, be sad, you can put everything there."	"On my first account, I was really thinking about everything. Sometimes, when I wanted to post, I'd think about what my audience needed. So I'd adjust the content accordingly."	"Instagram is my front stage, because I have a lot of followers, but actually, my backstage is only at home, only my family knows the real me."	"Social media is important because in the digital age, even people far away can still see our credibility."
I2	Yes	"For Instagram, I created two accounts. The	"For example, if I want to post on	"On my first Instagram account, I	"I think it's very important,

Informant	Multiple Accounts (Yes/No)	Reasons for multiple accounts	Content Curation	Front stage / back stage (role play)	Main Motivation
		first account is for following my friends, the second account is for my closest friends, more for my daily life."	Instagram, I definitely think first is my face not that bad, is the photo worth posting."	looked better, but on my second account, I was freer to be myself on campus, I adjusted my branding too."	because people can judge our personal branding my account used to be messy, but after becoming a student, I tidied it up."
I3	Yes	"I have two Instagram accounts, one public and one private, so the public account is neater, while the private account is more relaxed."	"If a photo doesn't match the image I'm trying to portray, I usually delete it. It makes it look neater."	"On social media, I try to be more of an extrovert, but in real life, I'm an introvert."	"Because almost everyone looks at social media first these days, I think it's important to maintain your image."
I4	Yes	"As for Instagram, I have several. There's about one, two, three. Three are active... There's also a business account, a photo backup account, and one for personal outings. So, there are five accounts in total."	"I like to pay attention to my feed if something doesn't feel right, I usually repost it to match the aesthetic of the previous post."	"On the front floor, I'm more serious, showing my professional side. But backstage, I can freely cry, laugh, or vent without having to post anything."	"Social media is important for first impressions, showing the positive side that people want to see.
I5	Yes	"I use TikTok and Instagram, and I have a second account on Instagram just for venting, but it's just for close friends."	"I like to archive old posts that no longer suit me, so they better fit my current image."	"On campus, I'm more formal, but on my second account, I'm more relaxed, I can upload trivial things."	"I think it's important because people can find out about our activities through social media, especially when we're

Informant	Multiple Accounts (Yes/No)	Reasons for multiple accounts	Content Curation	Front stage / back stage (role play)	Main Motivation
					looking for work..”
I6	Yes	“I have a main account for college activities and organizations, and another account specifically for my closest friends.”	“I'm very picky when it comes to posting. If it doesn't suit my mood or I'm feeling bad, I won't post it.”	“On my main account, I really maintain my image, but on other accounts I can be more relaxed, like with close friends.”	“I use social media to maintain my image and also to seek opportunities, so I have to think about what I post.”
I7	Yes	“I only have one main IG account, but I use the close friends feature to differentiate who can see it.”	“I'm more selective; not every photo makes it onto Instagram. I even deleted some old posts because they weren't appropriate anymore.”	“On Instagram, it's more formal, but in a WhatsApp group with close friends, you're freer to say anything.”	“Social media is very important now, especially for students, because it can be a digital portfolio.”
I8	No	“I mostly use Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn. But I only have one account, no more.”	“I posted it once, but it didn't align with the image I wanted to project, so I ended up deleting it.”	“For the front stage, it might be on LinkedIn or Instagram… but for the back stage, it's usually on WhatsApp or close friends.”	“Social media is important for building image and networks, especially in Jakarta, where the environment is competitive.”

The thematic summary table above was compiled to map the indicators, classifications, and representative quotes from the informants. This mapping serves as the basis for a deeper narrative discussion in the next section. Consistent with the findings of Agustini et al. (2022), this type of mapping is important because it shows how students actively negotiate their identities thru account separation practices, content curation, and cross-platform impression management. Thus, the empirical data presented can be directly linked to the dramaturgical theoretical framework used in this study.

Based on the results of data categorization, three major themes were found to be the main focus of this research, namely: (1) Multiple Identity Management, (2) Self-Presentation Strategy, and (3) Digital Stage Segmentation.

1. Multiple Identity Management

Out of the eight informants, seven (I1–I7) had more than one account on social media platforms like Instagram or TikTok. This indicates that the practice of multiple identities is not merely a phenomenon of dual account ownership, but a form of reflective awareness in managing roles and personas according to social context and communication goals. The main account is used to build a formal, professional, or personal brand image, while the second account serves as a space for more free and authentic personal expression.

I1 explained, "If the first account is more about branding, the second account is more random. You can vent, laugh, be sad... everything can be put there." Meanwhile, I2 added, "I created two Instagram accounts. The first account is for general friends, and the second account is only for close friends."

These two statements confirm that account separation is not merely technical, but a form of planned identity management. As for informants I7 and I8, they revealed another dimension of multiple identities, not in the number of accounts, but in how they interpret and use a single account to showcase different sides of themselves. I7 stated that she is "more selective in posting" and uses the close friends feature to separate her audience, while I8 affirmed that she "doesn't have a second account, but still sorts content according to context and posting purpose."

Thus, these results indicate that multiple identities among Generation Z students are not only measured by the number of accounts they own, but also by their individual ability to form and negotiate various versions of themselves in one or more digital spaces according to the situation and needs. This aligns with the view of Roccas & Brewer (2002) that social identity is multifaceted and flexible, depending on the context and audience.

2. Self-Presentation Strategy

All informants demonstrated a high level of awareness in managing their self-image on social media. This process includes content selection before uploading, deleting old posts considered irrelevant, arranging the esthetic of the feed, and using privacy features like close friends. I4 informs, emphasizing the importance of esthetics in digital image management by saying, "My Instagram feed needs to have a cohesive color scheme. If it's not right, I can delete it and redo it." Meanwhile, I5 and I6 highlighted the professional aspect of this practice. I6 stated, "I use social media to maintain my image and also to find opportunities, so I have to think about what I post." This statement indicates that self-presentation is not done solely for personal satisfaction, but also for academic, social, and professional needs.

Thus, the self-presentation strategies of Generation Z students in Jakarta can be categorized into two main forms: (1) Self-Enhancement Strategy, which involves presenting a positive, controlled, and reputation-oriented image in public spaces, and (2) Authentic Expression Strategy, which involves displaying a more honest and emotional side of oneself in private spaces such as second accounts or close friends. These two strategies demonstrate that students are not simply presenting themselves spontaneously, but rather thru reflective and calculated consideration according to the context of the platform and audience.

3. Digital Stage Segmentation

The analysis also revealed a pattern of role division between the front stage and back stage across various social media platforms. Instagram and LinkedIn are used as a front stage to build a professional and academic impression, while TikTok,

WhatsApp, and close friends become the backstage where they express themselves more freely and personally.

As I3 stated, "On social media, I try to be more extroverted, but in real life, I'm an introvert." This finding shows that students play different roles in the virtual world compared to the real world, adapting to the expectations and logic of the platform. This supports Goffman's (1959) concept of dramaturgy, where each individual acts as an actor, presenting a version of themselves according to the stage and audience they face.

Overall, the findings indicate that Generation Z students in Jakarta are developing complex and self-aware digital communication strategies. They manage multiple identities not only thru dual account ownership, but also by creating different personas within a single digital space. Meanwhile, the practice of reflective self-presentation demonstrates a balance between the need for self-expression and impression management toward the audience. This entire practice proves that the digital space for Generation Z functions as a dramaturgical arena, where they actively play with, negotiate, and design their identities. These three themes demonstrate how Gen Z students in Jakarta are not just passive users of social media, but also active actors who are aware of their role and image in the digital space. The patterns emerging from the interview results and content analysis indicate that students strategically utilize social media as a dramaturgical arena where they manage when to appear professional, when to present themselves personally, and how to adjust their persona to different audience contexts and platforms.

Thus, the following section will delve into each theme in depth based on field findings that have been linked to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory:

I. Multiple Identity

The phenomenon of multiple identities in this study describes how Generation Z students in Jakarta build, present, and manage more than one version of their self-identity on social media. Their digital identities are not singular and stable, but rather multiple, flexible, and adapted to context and audience. Within the framework of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy, this condition resembles an actor playing multiple roles on various stages, where each "stage" represents a social space with different expectations.

The research findings indicate that seven out of eight informants have more than one active account on one or more platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok. The use of multiple accounts serves to separate audiences and manage the self-impression they wish to present to different social groups. The main account is generally used to showcase the formal, professional, and personal branding aspects, while the second account is used for more personal, casual, and even emotional expression.

I1 explains, "If it's on my main account, it's more for personal branding. I post about my college activities and achievements, things that look neat. But on my second account, that's usually where I vent and speak freely, because only my close friends follow me there." (I1, 23 years old, Communication Science)

This statement describes a clear form of identity segmentation between public and private personas. Meanwhile, I2 emphasizes the social reasons behind separating accounts: "I don't feel like everyone needs to know my personal side. So, my main account is more for general things, and I put very personal stuff on

my second account, which only contains friends I trust." (I2, 22 years old, Communication Science)

For some informants, the multiple identity strategy is not just about segmenting audiences, but also a way to avoid context collapse a condition where various social groups (family, college friends, lecturers, or colleagues) converge in the same digital space, potentially leading to role conflicts (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). I4 even revealed that he has more than two accounts with specific functions: "For Instagram, I have several. There's a business account, a photo backup account, and another one for personal venting. So there are a total of five accounts. Their functions are all different, depending on who I want to show them to. (I4, 21 years old, Communication Science)

This statement shows that for some students, a single identity is not enough to encompass the various social expectations they face. Account separation is a form of digital role management that is done consciously and systematically. They position themselves as directors of their self-image, deciding when to appear professional and when to show their authentic personal side.

However, not all informants choose to create a second account. Informan I8, on the other hand, took a different approach. He only has one main account, but he uses Instagram's close friends feature to limit who can see his uploads. For him, this feature functions like a "private space" within the public stage. "I only have one account, I don't want to complicate things. But if I want to upload personal things, I use close friends so only certain people can see it." (I8, 23 years old, Communication Science)

The I8 approach suggests that multiple identities are not always realized thru owning many accounts, but can also be achieved by creating symbolic boundaries within a single digital space. This strategy proves that multiple identities are not always structural (in the form of dual accounts), but can be functional thru privacy settings, audience filtering, and content management. Thus, for some students, multiple identities are not just a technical issue, but a reflection of social awareness in controlling access to the parts of themselves they wish to present.

Furthermore, these findings support Roccas and Brewer's (2002) view in Social Identity Complexity theory, that individuals actively negotiate their social identities according to relevant audience groups. Gen Z students present different identities to their close friends, academic environment, and professional settings, without feeling inconsistent. They view each version of themselves as a legitimate representation of who they are, depending on the social context.

Additionally, the use of multiple accounts and privacy features like close friends also demonstrates a need for an authentic space free from performative pressure. I6 reports, "The main account needs to look good, be polite, and seem mature. But on the second account, you can be free, get angry, speak honestly, or joke around." (I6, 22 years old, Communication Science)

This quote demonstrates a clear distinction between the front stage and the back stage, as explained by Goffman (1959). On the front stage, individuals present an ideal image that aligns with social expectations; while on the back stage, they feel freer to express their true selves. Interestingly, for some informants like I7, the boundary between these two stages is not entirely clear. He admitted that he sometimes intentionally shows his personal side on his main account as a form of authentic self-expression.

"Sometimes I upload things that are quite honest on my main account, so people can see another side of me. But I still choose things that are relatively safe." (I7, 21 years old, Communication Science). From this, it can be seen that the practice of multiple identities by Generation Z students does not simply mean self-fragmentation, but is also a form of social adaptation to the digital space filled with norms, expectations, and surveillance. Whether by having multiple accounts or using the close friends feature, they try to maintain a balance between their need for privacy and their desire to stay connected with their audience.

This finding aligns with Kang & Bodenhausen's (2015) research, which showed that social media users actively manage their public and private personas as a way to avoid social pressure and maintain boundaries between their personal and professional lives. In the context of Generation Z students in Jakarta, multiple identity is not just a digital strategy, but also a reflection of urban social dynamics that demand role flexibility, self-awareness, and high social intelligence. Thus, multiple identity can be understood as a complex communication strategy not just about the number of accounts one has, but about students' ability to manage self-representation according to space, time, and audience. They are not just social media users, but also identity designers who consciously navigate between authenticity and impression, between privacy and publicity, in the ever-changing digital landscape.

II. Self-Presentation Strategy

The self-presentation practices of Generation Z students in Jakarta reflect a high awareness of the importance of managing impressions in the digital space. They don't just publish their daily activities; they curate, select, and modify their self-representation to align with their desired image. Within the framework of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy, this action is a performative form where individuals act as actors, presenting a specific version of themselves on the "front stage" of social media public space and concealing other aspects on the "back stage."

All informants admitted that their social media uploads were the result of careful selection. I1 explains: "If I want to post, I definitely think about it first, whether it fits my current image. If it's not a good fit anymore, I usually just delete or archive it. (I1, 23 years old, Communication Science). This statement indicates that every upload action is part of an impression management strategy. Students strive to maintain consistency in the image they previously built, even thru actions such as deleting or archiving old posts that are no longer relevant.

I3's report adds an emotional dimension to the process: "Sometimes I feel like I'm not my true self, but it's necessary to look good in front of people. I appear more outgoing on social media, even tho I'm actually very quiet." (I3, 22 years old, Communication Science). The phenomenon revealed by I3 shows the difference between online persona and offline personality. He plays the role of an extroverted individual on social media, while in the real world he tends to be introverted. This condition aligns with Goffman's (1959) concept of "role-playing," where individuals present a version of themselves that is appropriate for specific situational demands and audiences. In this context, self-presentation is not merely image manipulation, but a form of social adaptation to the expectations of the digital environment.

Some informants also highlighted the importance of esthetics as part of identity construction. I4 informs: "My Instagram feed needs to have a consistent color scheme to look neat and professional. I can re-edit old photos if the tone doesn't match." (I4, 21 years old, Communication Science). Visual curation practices like this demonstrate how self-presentation operates not only thru text or narrative, but also thru esthetic elements. From a dramaturgical perspective, this is similar to the use of costumes and props that support the characters played on stage.

Next, informant I6 explained the relationship between self-presentation and audience control: "I'm very selective about who can see my story. Sometimes when I want to vent, I just use close friends so I can still be honest but not everyone knows." (I6, 22 years old, Communication Science). The quote illustrates a hybrid strategy between multiple identities and self-presentation. The use of the close friends feature becomes a form of a "semi-private stage" that allows students to control the narrative without needing to create a new account. Dramaturgically, this can be understood as a form of back stage expansion, which is the creation of new space within the public stage to maintain a balance between authenticity and impression.

For some other informants, self-presentation also serves as a means to achieve specific goals, such as expanding their professional network or building their personal brand. I2 reports: "Now, if you want to find a job or internship, they'll definitely check your social media. That's why I'm very careful about the content on my main account so it looks active and productive." (I2, 22 years old, Communication Science).

This I2 statement confirms the strategic function of self-presentation as a reputational investment, aligning with the findings of Roulin & Levashina (2019) who stated that online image is a credibility indicator for recruiters. In this case, Generation Z students are not only presenting themselves for social acceptance, but also to optimize academic and professional opportunities. Interestingly, I5 revealed a tension between the desire to be authentic and social pressure to appear ideal: "Sometimes I want to post funny or silly things, but I'm afraid of being told it's inappropriate. So I chose the safe option, so it still looks 'full' but not too serious." (I5, 21 years old, Communication Science).

This quote illustrates the emotional dynamics behind the practice of self-presentation, highlighting the anxiety about audience perception (evaluation apprehension). Students are trying to balance their desire to be authentic with the need to maintain a positive image. This phenomenon aligns with the findings of Oberst et al. (2017) and Twenge & Campbell (2018), which highlight the psychological pressure resulting from the need for performance on social media.

Overall, the research findings indicate that self-presentation among Generation Z students is not spontaneous, but rather a reflective and strategic process. They assessed the context, audience, and social risks before presenting themselves in the digital space. This strategy encompasses three main aspects: (1) content curation selecting uploads based on image suitability, (2) audience control thru privacy features like close friends or private accounts, and (3) adapting communication style language, visuals, and tone to align with the norms of each platform.

This finding aligns with Ellison et al. (2007), who confirmed that social media provides users with a high degree of impression management control. In the context of students in Jakarta, this control is used not only to build a positive

image but also to maintain a psychological balance between public and private roles. Thus, self-presentation can be understood as a layered communication practice: on the one hand, presenting an idealized version of oneself, and on the other hand, maintaining private space to remain authentic.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the relevance of Goffman's dramaturgy in the context of contemporary social media, while also expanding its understanding to the digital realm where algorithmic features and platform architecture become part of the new "stage equipment." Meanwhile, empirically, the self-presentation practices of Generation Z students in Jakarta show that their digital identities are performative, contextual, and constantly renegotiated as audiences and platform dynamics change.

III. Digital Stage Segmentation

The research findings indicate that the identity management practices of Generation Z students in Jakarta do not only involve the creation of multiple identities and self-presentation strategies, but also encompass complex forms of digital space segmentation, which from a Goffman (1959) dramaturgical perspective can be referred to as digital stage segmentation. This segmentation describes how students differentiate between front stage, back stage, and middle stage spaces on various social media platforms, in order to tailor their messages, expressions, and audiences.

Most informants practiced this segmentation by differentiating the function of each platform based on audience characteristics and communication goals. Instagram, for example, serves as a front stage where they present a professional, esthetic, and credible version of themselves. I2 informs: "On Instagram, I appear more neat because many lecturers and campus people follow me. So you have to look polite and active." (I2, 22 years old, Communication Science).

Conversely, platforms like TikTok are used as a middle stage, a more fluid and interactive space where self-expression is freer but still controlled. I5 reports: "On TikTok, I can be more relaxed, like making funny or trending content, but I still have to be careful so I don't look strange. Because it's not just close friends who are watching. (I5, 21 years old, Communication Science).

As for the digital backstage, it is realized thru the use of private features such as close friends on Instagram, private messages (direct messages), or small groups on WhatsApp. These spaces serve as places for authentic expression, personal venting, or sharing humor that is not displayed to the general public. I8 clearly describes this: "I only have one account, but I often use close friends to vent or post personal things. So it's like having your own space, even tho it's on the same account." (I8, 22 years old, Communication Science).

Case I8 shows that digital stage segmentation doesn't always require multiple accounts, but rather the ability to utilize platform features to build symbolic boundaries between public and private spaces. Thus, digital segmentation is not only a result of the technical structure of social media, but also a representation of students' reflective awareness of how they want to be seen and by whom. This segmentation pattern also demonstrates a strategic function in avoiding context collapse (Marwick & Boyd, 2011), which is a situation where different audience groups mix in a single communication space. By tailoring the digital stage to context and audience, students can maintain consistency in their self-image while preserving authenticity in specific

contexts. As I4 stated: "I make it different on each platform so that the audience doesn't overlap. Instagram is for achievement, TikTok is for entertainment, LinkedIn is for professionals. So you know where the limits are." (I4, 21 years old, Communication Science).

From a dramaturgical perspective, this digital stage segmentation shows that social media has expanded the concepts of front stage and back stage to become more dynamic and layered. Each platform is not just a single stage, but also has "nested stages," where individuals can quickly switch roles depending on the features being used. Features like stories, close friends, private messages, and archives function as a "digital curtain" that allows users to adaptively negotiate their visibility (Papacharissi, 2011).

Additionally, digital stage segmentation also reveals a symbolic hierarchy influenced by the perceived social value of each platform. LinkedIn, for example, is considered a high-value professional space (a high-value front stage), while Instagram occupies a semi-public stage, and TikTok is often viewed as an entertainment stage with greater tolerance for spontaneity. This shows that Gen Z students understand the social logic of each platform and adjust their communication styles to strike a balance between authenticity, credibility, and social acceptance (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Theoretically, these findings expand Goffman's concept of dramaturgy in the digital context by introducing a new form of social stage that is multi-layered and platform-based. This segmentation allows digital actors to maintain control over their impressions even in a constantly connected and open space. Empirically, the results of this study confirm that Generation Z students in Jakarta are not only passive users of social media, but also active architects in building and managing their "digital stage" to align with diverse social roles and audience expectations.

3.2. Discussion

This discussion chapter integrates the findings of this study with Erving Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework to interpret how Generation Z university students in Jakarta construct and manage their digital identities through the practices of multiple identity, self-presentation, and *digital* stage segmentation across social media platforms. The dramaturgical approach views social interaction as a theatrical performance in which individuals act as performers who play specific roles before an audience in order to create desired impressions (impression management). In this context, social media functions as a "digital stage" where individuals strategically perform, negotiate, and adjust their identities based on audience expectations and social context.

Within dramaturgical theory, Goffman (1959) explains that individuals constantly perform according to social roles and situational expectations. The findings reveal that Generation Z students are acutely aware that social media constitutes a public arena with multiple overlapping audiences peers, lecturers, family members, and even potential employers. This awareness compels them to act as *digital actors* who actively regulate their self-image to suit the expectations of these different audience groups.

As expressed by informant I1: "On my main account, I focus more on personal branding, while the second account is where I vent. Each account has its own audience". This illustrates conscious impression management. The *main account* serves as the *front stage*, where students perform an ideal, credible, and professional self, while the *second account* or *close friends* feature functions as the *back stage*, a more intimate space for

authentic and emotional expression. This aligns with Marwick and Boyd's (2011) notion of *context collapse* the blending of multiple audiences in a single digital space which users try to avoid through account or audience segmentation.

The findings show that multiple identity is not limited to having several social media accounts, but rather represents a reflective ability to construct and negotiate various versions of the self according to context. Seven of the eight informants reported owning more than one active account, while one (I8) maintained only a single account but used the *close friends* feature to filter audiences. This indicates that multiple identities can be both structural (via separate accounts) and functional (via audience control).

In Goffman's (1959) terms, individuals perform "multiple characters" in different social situations. The study's results illustrate this dynamic vividly in the digital realm: students enact distinct *virtual roles* to meet diverse social expectations. For example, I4 manages five separate Instagram accounts for business, photography, and personal venting reflecting a highly conscious process of audience and role differentiation.

This aligns with Roccas and Brewer's (2002) Social Identity Complexity Theory, which posits that individuals flexibly negotiate their social identities across contexts without losing self-coherence. In this light, multiple identity among Jakarta's Generation Z students is not a sign of inconsistency, but a reflection of their social intelligence and adaptability in navigating complex digital environments. Furthermore, I8's approach highlights that *multiple identity* is not always achieved through account proliferation. "I only have one account; I don't want to complicate things. But if I want to post something personal, I use close friends so only certain people can see it." (I8, 23 years old).

This shows that dual identity can be realized symbolically thru privacy filters and selective visibility, rather than structurally. Therefore, this is not just a technical tactic, but a social strategy rooted in an awareness of audience dynamics and personal boundaries. For Gen Z, dual identities serve as a mechanism to balance authenticity and social conformity in a digital landscape that is both surveilled and performative. This finding suggests that the formation of multiple identities among Generation Z students is not merely a technical act, but a social strategy that arises from an awareness of professional demands, personal branding needs, and audience dynamics on social media. They build more than one identity to adapt to different contexts – maintaining a formal and credible image in public while freely expressing their private side in private spaces. Thus, this practice becomes a way for them to balance between self-authenticity and the professional image needed in both academic and work environments.

All informants demonstrated a high degree of reflexivity in managing their online self-presentation. Their practices include content selection, feed aesthetic organization, deletion of outdated posts, and the use of privacy features such as close friends. From a dramaturgical perspective, these actions represent deliberate impression management Goffman (1959) a performance in which individuals craft and maintain a consistent image before their digital audience.

As noted by I1: "Before posting, I always think whether it fits my image. If it doesn't, I delete or archive it". Such statements highlight that online expression is far from spontaneous; it is a calculated and goal-oriented communication process. Aesthetic considerations also play an important role. As I4 described: "My Instagram feed has to be consistent in color; if it doesn't match, I'll delete and redo it". In dramaturgical terms, this can be compared to *stage preparation* selecting costumes, props, and lighting to support a convincing performance. Social media thus becomes a carefully curated space for identity display.

Beyond social motives, some students treat self-presentation as a professional investment. "Nowadays, when you apply for internships or jobs, they always check your social media. That's why I make sure my main account looks active and professional." (I2, 22 years old). This finding reinforces Roulin & Levashina (2019) argument that digital impression management is increasingly tied to employability and reputation capital. Generation Z students consciously curate their profiles to align with professional norms, blurring the line between personal and institutional self-presentation.

However, this process is not free from tension. I3 admitted, "Sometimes I feel like I'm not being my true self, but I need to look good in front of people. On social media, I appear more extroverted, even though I'm quiet in real life". This reveals the emotional labor behind digital performance what Goffman describes as the dissonance between *the performed self* and *the authentic self*. Students experience a psychological duality: striving to appear ideal while maintaining a sense of personal truth. Such findings echo Oberst et al. (2017) and Twenge & Campbell (2018), who noted that online impression management often generates performative anxiety and self-monitoring fatigue among young users.

The analysis extends Goffman's concept of *front stage* and *back stage* into a more complex structure what can be called *digital stage segmentation*. Generation Z students consciously differentiate between platforms and features according to audience composition and communicative purpose. Instagram and LinkedIn operate as *front stages* for formal and professional performances, TikTok as a *middle stage* for semi-public, creative expression, and *close friends* or messaging groups as *back stages* for personal, authentic interaction.

As I8 described: "I only have one account, but I often use close friends to vent or post personal things. It's like having a private space within the same account". This indicates that digital stages are fluid and overlapping rather than strictly separated. Privacy settings, direct messages, and *stories* function as *digital curtains* that allow individuals to adjust visibility without fully withdrawing from the public eye. Papacharissi (2011) refers to this as the networked self a dynamic form of identity shaped by technological affordances and audience management strategies.

Moreover, each platform carries its own symbolic hierarchy: LinkedIn represents the high-value professional front stage, Instagram the semi-public domain of aesthetic presentation, and TikTok the performative entertainment arena. As I4 summarized, "I make it different on each platform. Instagram for achievements, TikTok for entertainment, LinkedIn for professionalism". This segmentation demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of social media logics (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Students adapt not only their content but also their tone, visuals, and performance style according to the norms of each digital stage, reflecting advanced *platform literacy*.

Theoretically, this study reaffirms the enduring relevance of Goffman's dramaturgy in the digital era but also expands it by introducing the notion of the *multi-layered digital stage*. In today's interconnected world, individuals do not merely perform before a single audience but simultaneously before overlapping, algorithmically mediated publics. Each interaction involves a negotiation between authenticity, visibility, and control.

Contextually, the findings reveal that Jakarta's Generation Z students operate under significant performative pressure. They seek to maintain authenticity while adhering to social expectations and visibility norms. Their identity construction reflects *fluidity* and *strategic adaptability*—what Mendelson and Papacharissi (2011) describe as identity-in-motion: continuously shaped, performed, and redefined through digital interaction.

Viewed through the dramaturgical lens, the practices of *multiple identity*, *self-presentation*, and *digital stage segmentation* represent a complex and reflective form of *performative communication*. Generation Z students are not passive consumers of digital media; they are *identity architects* who actively design, curate, and negotiate their self-representations.

Social media thus serves as a dramaturgical arena where the boundaries between the actor and the audience, authenticity and performance, are continuously blurred. Students maintain professionalism on the front stage, authenticity on the back stage, and navigate between them through a hybrid space mediated by algorithms and features. Ultimately, the digital identity of Jakarta's Generation Z reflects not fragmentation, but *adaptive coherence* a strategic balance between self-expression, impression management, and audience awareness in an increasingly performative society.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that Generation Z students in Jakarta manage their digital identities through complex strategies, combining multiple identity practices and self-presentation in social media spaces. The use of multiple accounts, content curation, and differentiation between front and back stages shows that digital identities are not singular, but dynamic and contextual. Informants emphasized that social media functions as a performative space where they negotiate public and private personas. An interesting finding emerged from the I3 narrative, which presented themselves as extroverts on social media but remained introverts in real life, in line with Goffman's dramaturgical concept of social roles being performed according to the audience.

Thus, this study concludes that the dynamics of Generation Z students' digital identities are the result of layered negotiations influenced by social context, platform norms, and impression management strategies. The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on cross-platform practices with a dramaturgical approach that integrates multiple identities and self-presentation simultaneously. The limitations of this study are the limited number of informants and the geographical scope, which is focused only on Jakarta. Therefore, further research could expand the geographical context and deepen the analysis of more specific psychological and professional dimensions.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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