Navigating Transnational Challenges: The Influence of Social Media on Indonesian Student Migrants in Sweden During the COVID-19 Era

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A B S T R A C T

This study examines how social media has impacted the decision-making process of Indonesian students in Sweden who are considering migration during the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the unique circumstances of the pandemic, health and safety have become critical factors in the decision-making process. The research was conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods, which were highly effective in gathering data. A survey was conducted with 33 participants, who were selected using accidental sampling. In addition, open interviews were conducted with ten participants from different countries, which provided valuable insights into the subject matter. Data was collected through online questionnaires and interviews across multiple social media platforms. Although there were some potential limitations in data quality and participant engagement, the methods utilized in this study were highly effective and produced reliable results. The study found that social media was vital in helping Indonesian students make informed migration decisions and obtain information about the pandemic. In particular, social media facilitates knowledge sharing and communication with friends and colleagues. However, the pandemic created temporary obstacles for migrants considering returning to Indonesia due to safety and health concerns.

A. INTRODUCTION

O ver the past decade, there has been a significant rise in Indonesian students migrating abroad to pursue higher education. This trend is driven by a desire to gain knowledge and experiences that will help them succeed in the future. Most of these students are pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, with only a small number coming from high school. The increase in mobility among young people has contributed to this trend (Findlay, 2006). These students are highly motivated and driven to study in order to secure their future, as evidenced by their aspirations and behavior (Malamassam, 2016). They believe the experience will benefit them personally, socially, and professionally (Brooks & Waters, 2010; Hidayati, 2017).

The advancement of technology and communication has made it easier for young people to consider studying abroad, breaking down geographical barriers. A study conducted in Groningen, the Netherlands, found that the mastery of communication technology has encouraged relocation through social networks and online sources of information (Hidayati, 2017). In the Fourth Industrial Revolution era, individuals could access all the necessary information through communication technology, particularly social media. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted various aspects of life, including population mobility (Ranjan & Bisht, 2020). As of June 6, 2020, 216 countries were reported to have been infected, with 6,663,304 cases and 392,803 deaths (WHO, 2020). The United States accounted for nearly half of the reported cases (WHO, 2020), and this trend remained consistent through the end of December 2020. The pandemic has prompted governments in many countries to implement various preventative measures, such as restricting movement and closing borders, to curb the spread of the virus. As a result, population mobility worldwide has been postponed, and some potential migrants have had to cancel their travel plans.

The mobility restrictions have significantly impacted international students, particularly those slated to begin their studies in 2020, as they are now compelled to delay their departure. Furthermore, many universities have shifted their teaching and learning methods online, resulting in numerous international students being stranded in their host countries and requiring assistance to travel back to Indonesia or engage in academic and non-academic endeavours. Moreover, they have been unable to participate in college events, socialise, or reunite with their families in their home countries. (Awasthi, 2020).

Official data regarding the number of Indonesian students studying abroad impacted by the mobility policy is currently unavailable. However, their social media comments suggest that returning home while travelling between cities and countries is nearly impossible (Hidayati, 2020). While local students can return to their parents' homes during the pandemic, this is not feasible for those studying abroad. Many countries have closed their borders and suspended international flights, leaving migrant students stranded in desolate campuses and locked cities, causing anxiety for themselves and their families in Indonesia. The closure of borders and flight cancellations has left millions trapped in various locations (Sirkeci & Yucesahin, 2020; Chakraborty & Maity, 2020).

This research investigates social media's impact on Indonesian students' decision-making process regarding migration to Sweden during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study explores how information on social media platforms influences the migration decisions of returning students. Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for shaping the perceptions and decision-making of potential migrants, and this research seeks to understand its role in the migration decisions of Indonesian students. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the migration patterns of people worldwide, and Indonesian students are no exception. The pandemic conditions in Indonesia and Sweden will considerably impact the migration decision. The research will examine the factors that influence the migration decisions of returning students, such as health and safety concerns, economic prospects, and educational opportunities.

Furthermore, the study compares the decision-making process of returning to Indonesia under normal conditions and during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will explore the factors that have the most significant impact on migration flows, such as the difference in the pandemic case between Indonesia and Sweden. This research will provide valuable insights into social media's impact on Indonesian students' migration decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will help us better understand the factors influencing their decision-making process and provide valuable recommendations for policymakers to develop effective strategies to manage migration flows.

B. METHOD

This research is part of a study with the title "Intensi Pulang Pelajar Indonesia di Luar Negeri pada Masa Pandemi COVID-19" and it used online questionnaires that were distributed between April 12 and May 13, 2020 in 19 countries. The questionnaires were shared through various channels, including social media platforms, university mailing lists, and online student forums, in order to reach Indonesian student migrants residing in different countries and regions. Respondents were selected through accidental sampling, where participants who were readily available and willing to participate were chosen. For this paper, we only selected respondents from Sweden.

To ensure that the sample was representative, we did not rely solely on random selection. Instead, we deliberately took steps to ensure that the sample was diverse in terms of several key factors, including geographical location, academic disciplines, and demographic characteristics. To achieve this, we established a set of inclusion criteria that required all participants to be Indonesian citizens who were currently enrolled as students in universities abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using these criteria, we were able to gather a sample that accurately represented the population under study. Furthermore, we interviewed ten respondents to gain further insights into the experiences of Indonesian student migrants during the pandemic. These interviews supplemented the quantitative data collected through the online questionnaires and enriched the overall findings of the study.

The study's primary objective was to explore the intention of Indonesian student migrants living abroad to return home amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The collected data provides valuable insights into the subject, including the reasons for their decision to stay or return home, their challenges, and the support they received from their universities and the government. To analyze the data collected from Indonesian student migrants, this study employed both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques. Thematic analysis was utilized to examine qualitative data gathered from interviews or open-ended survey responses. This method involved identifying recurring patterns, themes, and categories within the data, achieved through transcription and coding of interview transcripts or survey responses. By systematically organizing the data into themes and sub-themes, researchers gained insights into the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of Indonesian student migrants during the pandemic.

On the other hand, statistical analysis was employed to analyze quantitative data obtained through structured questionnaires or surveys. This involved summarizing and analyzing numerical data using techniques such as descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and correlation analysis. Descriptive statistics provided a summary of sample population characteristics, while inferential statistics allowed for examining relationships between variables or differences between groups. Correlation analysis explored relationships of interest, such as the link between academic performance and migration decisions.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by Indonesian student migrants during the pandemic and their coping strategies. Triangulation, a

methodological approach comparing findings from different data sources, likely validated and corroborated results. Ultimately, the combined approach provided valuable insights for policymakers and future research, informing strategies to support Indonesian student migrants and guiding further investigation into their experiences.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Social Media and Migration during COVID-19

Globalisation is a complex phenomenon that involves various interconnected processes, including advancements in information technology that have resulted in widening access to population exchanges. This has led to stronger regional relationships that can facilitate internal population mobility and international flow. The availability of communication technology has played a significant role in this process, enabling individuals to connect and explore new opportunities for migration. Additionally, the rise of the internet and social media has made it much easier for immigrants to connect with their next origin or destination, as they can now access a wealth of information and resources that were previously unavailable. As a result of these developments, the world has become more interconnected and mobile, with people from all over the globe now able to explore new places, cultures, and experiences.

Social media plays a crucial role in maintaining ties for migrants during the migration process. It serves as a communication channel that can aid in the relocation process through four key functions: (1) strengthening strong ties with family and friends, (2) establishing connections with individuals who can assist in the move, (3) creating a network of latent ties, and (4) providing valuable insider knowledge on migration (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012). However, social media requires a virtual infrastructure, synced contacts, and an open environment to support network migration effectively. Relationships formed through social media networks can significantly reduce the cost and risk of migration by exchanging information, resources, and support. As per migration network theory, an individual's connections are tied to where they interact with others. The influence of social media on the decision-making processes of Indonesian student migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic can be examined from various perspectives. With social media platforms offering access to a wealth of information on education options overseas, travel restrictions, visa procedures, and health and safety measures, Indonesian students have a lot to consider when deciding whether to pursue their studies abroad. Through social media, they can also connect with other migrants, alumni, and support groups, making it an essential platform for them.

According to Crivello's research in 2011, young people and students often migrate for education due to the limited accessibility of qualified institutions, especially at higher education levels. Eacott and Sonn (2006) also noted that young people relocate to pursue more educational opportunities and broaden their horizons. A unique characteristic of youth mobility is "*liquid migration*" which involves transitory mobility that can become permanent. The migrant is typically the first generation in their family, and the reason for their travel is unpredictable. Elder et al. (1996) identified three determinants of the migration decision-making process for youth, with education as the primary reason, including social context, selection, and cohesion. Social context refers to socio-economic and demographic factors, while selection is related to selectivity issues. Social cohesion pertains to cultural and environmental factors among young people, with gender and migration experiences as important determinants. While most Indonesian student migrants are male, there has been an increase in the number of females. Magnan et al. (2007) found that young women have greater migration opportunities than men. However, there is no significant difference in the proportion of young women and men who migrate for higher education (Chiang et al., 2015). Lastly, young migrants with lifetime status are more likely to migrate than those without a migration history (Easthope & Gabriel, 2008; Findlay et al., 2012).

Research has suggested that migrant issues play a vital role in determining the decision of students to relocate to pursue higher education. According to studies conducted by Elder et al. and Crivello, young individuals with exceptional academic achievements tend to have greater opportunities for mobility, especially for educational purposes (Crivello, 2011; Elder et al., 1996). Additionally, students' academic performance in their hometown can significantly affect their ability to compete in higher education at their destination. This highlights the importance of academic excellence, as it can help students expand their educational horizons and achieve their career goals in a competitive environment.

Various factors, including social bonding, influence the decision-making process of migration. Social bonding is considered crucial for young individuals as it refers to their emotional attachment to their families and neighbourhoods in the area of origin. This attachment is shaped by the norms and values of the local culture and the relationships and connections they have built over time. Studies have shown that social bonding plays a significant role in the decision-making process of migration, as it affects the willingness of young individuals to leave their hometowns.

In the area of origin, communities highly appreciate their members who have migrated. This appreciation stems from the belief that only young individuals with exceptional academic achievements and skills can migrate to other locations or abroad. Therefore, for young people, migration should be a means of meeting expectations and achieving higher social status in their hometown. This pursuit of social status is often seen as a driving force for young individuals to consider migration a viable option for their future.

In these times of limited physical interaction, virtual communities have become a vital source of emotional support, practical advice, and a sense of belonging for

those pursuing education abroad. With the help of social media, students can access firsthand accounts and experiences of other migrants, providing them with valuable insights and strategies to overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic. By making informed decisions based on risk assessment, such as opting for countries with better healthcare systems or online learning options, students can pursue their dreams of studying abroad with confidence.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, students have experienced heightened mental health difficulties, including stress, anxiety, and isolation. Social media platforms can provide vital resources for mental health support, connecting students with peer groups and wellness activities. This support can positively affect their decision to migrate by addressing concerns about their mental wellbeing. Additionally, social media channels are an important source of information about government policies, travel advisories, and pandemic updates. Indonesian students rely on this information to stay informed about changes in immigration regulations, quarantine protocols, and academic program adjustments that may impact their migration decisions. Furthermore, social media interactions with peers who have already migrated or are planning to migrate can influence Indonesian students' perceptions and decisions regarding education abroad. Positive experiences shared by peers may validate their own aspirations for international education despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The decision to migrate is a complex process involving various factors, including social bonding. Understanding the role of social bonding in the decision-making process of migration is crucial for policymakers and researchers who aim to develop effective strategies to address the challenges and opportunities associated with migration. Social media plays a multifaceted role in shaping the decision-making processes of Indonesian student migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. It serves as a source of information, support, community, and validation, empowering students to navigate the complexities of migration amidst global uncertainties. Understanding these dynamics is essential for policymakers and educational institutions seeking to support and facilitate international student mobility during and beyond the pandemic.

2. International Student Migration and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on migration decision-making processes. Regulations and the overall situation have led many migrants to postpone or cancel their plans, resulting in unpredictable and rapidly changing migration patterns. Regarding international student migration, the decision is typically based on a rational evaluation of the costs and benefits involved. These costs may be economic, social, or psychological, such as dealing with separation from loved ones, adapting to a new environment, and building new social networks. Nonetheless, migrant students often have high hopes for their decisions, including expectations for

educational benefits and cultural experiences. Before making a decision, potential migrants will always calculate the costs involved and view the decision-making process as an investment in their human capital, according to the rational choice theory (Yezer & Thurston, 1976).

Comprehensive research is needed on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the migration patterns of students. However, some studies indicate that familial connections and social networks could motivate students to return to their hometowns (Bijwaard & Wang, 2016; Zorlu & Kooiman, 2019). It is believed that during a pandemic, the family factor can greatly influence the decision to return home as students seek to be closer to their loved ones and find emotional support during difficult times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the education sector, particularly student mobility (de Wit & Altbah, 2020; Mok et al., 2021). The virus outbreak has led to travel restrictions and campus closures, creating multiple obstacles for students considering studying abroad. The impact of this situation has been felt globally, with studies conducted in China and Hong Kong revealing that many people have had to reschedule, alter, or even cancel their plans due to the pandemic (Mok et al., 2021). This has not only affected mobility but has also had serious implications for the tertiary education sector, especially in recipient countries that rely heavily on migrant students.

The United States, for instance, has seen a sharp decline in international student enrollment, with a Higher Education Institute survey in 2020 indicating a 90% reduction, and the academic year 2020-2021 also witnessed a significant 30% drop in enrollments, which has had severe financial implications for universities and tertiary institutions. Similarly, the United Kingdom has also seen a 30% decrease in enrollments in 2020. These figures highlight the severity of the pandemic's impact on the education sector and the need for innovative solutions to address these challenges.

The disruptions caused by the pandemic have also significantly impacted the mental health and well-being of students. The sudden change in circumstances, coupled with the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, has caused stress and anxiety among students. Universities and tertiary institutions have had to adapt to these changes, offering support services to help students cope with the challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant challenges to the education sector, particularly student mobility. The decline in international student enrollment has had severe financial implications for universities and tertiary institutions. Additionally, the pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of students. Therefore, it is imperative to adopt innovative solutions to address these challenges and support students in pursuing their education during these challenging times.

The pandemic has presented significant financial challenges for universities and countries that rely on

income from international students, such as Australia. Educational institutions now depend heavily on international students as their primary source of revenue. Moreover, the pandemic's impact varies across regions, and this will affect the flow of student mobility. Countries with better control over the situation may become more attractive destinations for students. The pandemic has also escalated concerns about health security and safety for prospective migrant students and their families (Marginson, 2020). Government policies in different countries have further complicated international student migration. For instance, the United States government's initial policy of not granting visas to students taking all online courses during the pandemic (Mok et al., 2021) was a significant barrier to migration to the US, even though it has since been revoked.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on migrant students, preventing them from returning to their home countries due to travel restrictions and border closures. In response, governments worldwide have implemented various measures to combat the spread of the virus. These measures include medical interventions such as developing and distributing vaccines and emergency laws such as '*social distancing*' and '*lockdowns*' to restrict movement and reduce transmission (Marginson, 2020).

Furthermore, many educational institutions have had to shift their learning activities online and close their campuses to reduce the risk of infection (Firang, 2020). This has posed significant challenges for students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds who need reliable internet and technology access. Despite these challenges, educators and policymakers are working to find innovative solutions to support students and ensure their educational needs are met during these uncertain times.

The current closure of universities due to the pandemic has put a tremendous amount of pressure on international migrant students. As a result, they are experiencing a wide range of psychological and social challenges, including anxiety, emotional stress, impaired self-confidence, loss of social connections, and a significant decline in academic performance. Unfortunately, these students are often not among the primary recipients of government assistance programs as they are considered non-permanent residents. Additionally, financial difficulties are already a significant concern for international students, even outside of a pandemic. These issues have been extensively studied and documented by researchers in the field (Choudaha, 2020; McGill, 2013; Regehr, 2011).

Many experts in the academic community express a high degree of confidence in an eventual improvement of the current situation. They do so by comparing past crises, such as the SARS outbreak in 2003 and the global economic crisis of 2008. Marginson (2020), Firang (2020), Bilecen (2020), and Pigaiani et al. (2020) are some of the notable scholars who have shared this perspective. The experts' optimistic outlook is further reinforced by the recognition that international migrant students play a crucial role in higher education institutions' policies and

learning activities. These students bring diverse perspectives, enriching the educational experience for all students. The experts believe this diversity and global connectivity will enable higher education institutions to weather the current crisis and emerge stronger in the long run.

The decision-making process of migrant students during the pandemic is influenced by factors like familial ties, social networks, and emotional support systems. Research highlights how familial connections often lead students to return home during crises, while the rational choice theory emphasizes weighing economic, social, and psychological factors before migration decisions (Yezer & Thurston, 1976). Universities and governments play crucial roles in shaping migrant students' experiences. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted education with travel restrictions, campus closures, and financial strains on universities reliant on international student tuition fees (de Wit & Altbah, 2020; Mok et al., 2021). Government policies like visa regulations further complicate international student migration (Marginson, 2020). Incorporating perspectives from universities and governments offers insights into the structural barriers and support mechanisms affecting migrant students.

International organizations such as the World Health Organization and UNESCO provide guidance on health interventions, educational strategies, and policy recommendations globally. Considering their perspectives helps assess the pandemic's global impact on student mobility and identify best practices for mitigation. Integrating diverse stakeholder perspectives enriches the analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for migrant students during the pandemic. By examining individual experiences, institutional responses, and global trends, researchers can develop targeted interventions and policy recommendations to support continued access to education for migrant students during these challenging times.

3. COVID-19 Situation in Sweden and Europe

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the entire world, and Europe is no exception. Initially, the region was able to contain the spread of the virus quite effectively, while other parts of the world struggled to control the pandemic. However, in the fourth quarter of 2020, there was a sudden surge in the number of cases, causing Europe to become the new epicentre of the pandemic. The number of daily cases multiplied; as of November 2020, there were 93,194,922 active cases in the region.

It is worth mentioning that Italy, which had previously managed to lower its COVID-19 cases, has seen a rise in the number of cases once again, adding to the growing concern. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that until January 2021, the total number of deaths due to COVID-19 in Europe had reached 81,800. This staggering number highlights the severity of the pandemic's impact on the region.

The pandemic has caused significant disruptions to daily life, businesses, and economies across Europe, and governments have had to implement various measures to control the spread of the virus. These measures have included lockdowns, restrictions on travel and gatherings, mandatory mask-wearing, and social distancing guidelines. As the situation continues to evolve, it is crucial to remain vigilant and follow guidelines provided by health authorities to help prevent the spread of the virus.

As of December 2020, Sweden has reported the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Scandinavia, with 297 thousand cases (WHO, 2021). Interestingly, the sharp increase in cases only began in October 2020 and continues to rise until now. This contrasts with many other countries that experienced a surge in cases earlier in the year. Despite Sweden's initial strategy of aiming for herd immunity, there have yet to be any signs of success. The government has recently moved to tighten regulations to slow the spread of the virus, but there is still no lockdown or mandatory mask-wearing policy in place. It remains to be seen how effective these measures will be in controlling the spread of COVID-19 in Sweden.

It has been reported that COVID-19 cases are rising in Scandinavia due to the misconception that Scandinavians are immune to the pandemic. Here is a transcript from an interview with an informant.

"At first, we all thought it was safe here. However, people keep their distance and wear masks. How come we still hang out and exercise together? I do not know how suddenly it jumped when it started to get cold in the autumn. "(Bn, male, 28 years old).

"I was grateful that you lived here when you saw the case in Italy. Oh, how come it is getting worse now. More positive acquaintances maybe because we were a bit relaxed before." (Fy, 20-year-old girl).

4. Intention Migration of Indonesian Student Migrant: The Survey

A recent UNESCO report revealed that the global number of international students has surged by approximately 5.3 million, according to a study by Huang et al. (2020). Over the past two decades, China has been the leading supplier of international students. However, the ongoing pandemic is likely to cause this trend to slow down in the coming years. This decline in international students will significantly impact higher education institutions, particularly in developing countries where tuition fees are the primary source of income. Additionally, the quality of human resources worldwide could also suffer. Given the circumstances, it is anticipated that the educational system will face significant challenges adapting to the new normal brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This section will thoroughly examine the migration of Indonesian migrant students abroad, focusing on migration and the decision-making process to return to their home areas or settle in their current residences either temporarily or permanently. The migration intentions will be strongly associated with the influence of social media on their decision-making process, as has been established by Todaro (1978), McGrew and Wilson (1982), Burch (1980), Becker and Murphy (1988), Goldthorpe (1996), and Elster (2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the migration plans of Indonesian students. The severity and mortality rates in certain countries have significantly influenced their decisions regarding migration. As a result, the factors that push or pull them towards or away from migration have noticeably shifted. An analysis of migration intentions is used instead of existing migration patterns to understand future migration trends better. In this context, "*intention*" pertains to "*mere words*" or "*new plans*" rather than concrete plans that have already been put into action. This approach is rooted in van Dalen and Henkens (2013) study and is crucial to accurately predicting future migration patterns.

The survey conducted on Indonesian student migrants in Sweden during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed various factors affecting their migration intentions. While 36.4% of the respondents expressed their intention to return home in 2020, the majority (54.5%) did not intend to return. Additionally, 9.1% of the respondents who initially planned to return home later canceled their plans. The survey findings suggest that the migration decision-making process is complex and influenced by diverse demographic variables. Several factors likely contribute to these varied migration intentions. The severity and mortality rates of COVID-19 in different countries likely play a significant role, influencing students' perceptions of safety and risk associated with returning home or remaining abroad. Additionally, factors such as familial connections, financial considerations, academic pursuits, and personal circumstances may also influence migration intentions.

Furthermore, the survey findings suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced additional challenges and uncertainties into the migration decision-making process. Strict university and immigration policies, flight suspensions, entry restrictions, and health and administrative procedures pose significant barriers to migration for Indonesian student migrants. These obstacles may force students to reconsider or cancel their migration plans, contributing to the variability in migration intentions observed in the survey.

Moreover, the survey findings provide insights into Indonesian student migrants' experiences during the pandemic and their perceptions of government policies and support measures. Students may experience uncertainty, stress, and isolation due to the disruption caused by the pandemic. Their perceptions of government policies and support measures may vary depending on their effectiveness in addressing these challenges and facilitating student mobility. The survey findings suggest that policymakers, universities, and support organizations need to consider the diverse needs and circumstances of migrant students and develop targeted interventions and support measures accordingly.

Table 1. Intention of Indonesian Student's Return Migration in Sweden during COVID-19 (n=33)

Intention of Migration	Percentage
Have plans to go home	36.4
Do not have plant	54.5
Cancel plans to go home	9.1
Total	100

Various challenges, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the strict university and immigration policies in Indonesia and Sweden, have caused the cancellation of migration plans. Certain European countries, including Sweden, have suspended flights and imposed entry restrictions on individuals from specific countries, making it extremely difficult for migrant students who have yet to complete their studies to return home. Unfortunately, Indonesia was added to this list in mid-2020, further compounding the issue.

Additionally, migrant students are faced with a multitude of health and administrative procedures that must be completed before they can return home, which can be both time-consuming and costly. These procedures can cost students tens of thousands of dollars in insurance fees, which many cannot afford. As a result, these obstacles have made it nearly impossible for students to return home and have forced them to cancel their migration plans.

It is important to consider the situation in the destination area when deciding whether to migrate. As noted by Lee (1966), there are positive and negative factors to weigh. Nonetheless, maintaining an optimistic outlook and focusing on the positives is crucial. Despite the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, we can still find ways to learn and develop. For example, leveraging online resources and virtual networks can allow us to connect with individuals in the destination area, alleviating any concerns and enabling us to make informed decisions about visiting Indonesia.

Table 2. Student migrant perspective on COVID-19 situation in Indonesia (n=33)

Perspective	Percentage
Worried	84.8
Not Worried	15.2
Total	100

5. The Impact of Social Media on International Student Migration during COVID-19

A student migrant seeking to return home has been utilising social media to gather information about their intended destination. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has temporarily halted their plans. Given the current circumstances, the migrant prioritises their safety

and well-being before embarking on their journey. Consequently, they have opted to delay their return until conditions improve.

In Sweden, it is common for migrant students to develop a deep emotional attachment to their home country, which often draws them back after completing their studies. Unfortunately, the pandemic has created temporary obstacles for those hoping to journey home. Despite leaving their origin, these individuals maintain a strong connection to their roots that overrides practical considerations such as job prospects or better living conditions in their adopted country. Given the uncertainty and travel restrictions, the pandemic has made it even more difficult for them to decide whether to return. Despite these challenges, however, their longing for home remains strong, and they eagerly anticipate the day when they can reunite with their loved ones and communities.

Indonesian student migrants use various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp. These internet-based applications are rooted in the principles and technology of Web 2.0 and are designed to facilitate the creation and sharing of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These students will likely be well-versed in using social media as young adults. It can be a fast information source about recent issues in society. A study by Whitting and Williams (2013) mentioned the purpose of social media for self-education. It facilitates users to share and discuss information with others. Unlike TV and the internet as an information source, social media is interactive and allows users to communicate and share information through a two-way dialogue.

Based on the findings presented in Figure 2, student migrants in Sweden have turned to multiple social media channels to stay informed about COVID-19. Twitter has proven to be the most popular source of information of all the platforms used. This is largely due to its ability to rapidly disseminate news to a broad audience through its unique micro-blogging format. As the pandemic unfolds, Twitter has played a vital role in raising awareness and shaping mainstream media coverage through its concise, timely updates.
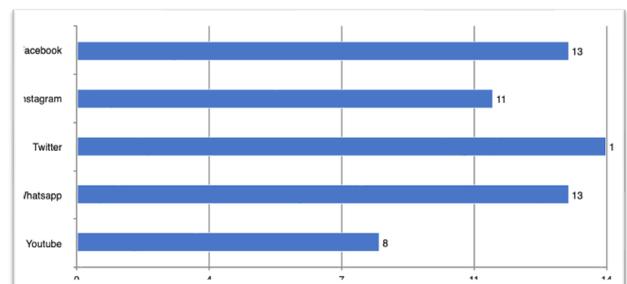
Figure 2. The Type of Social Media Platform used to find information about Covid-19 in Indonesia

Many migrants turn to social media platforms to forge and maintain connections with individuals in their destinations and home countries. This practice can even influence their decision-making process when it comes to migrating. By using social media to establish new

relationships with their destination communities, migrants can move more safely and with minimal exposure to COVID-19. Social media also proves useful for student migrants who are contemplating returning home. Twitter is a particularly popular tool for obtaining information on pandemic conditions between Sweden and Indonesia. Numerous participants shared personal accounts of how social media kept them informed and connected throughout their migration journeys.

"I read online news and subsequently go to Twitter to gain more comprehensive information. I discussed with another user by replying and retweeting the posts there" (Gr, male, 25 years old).

In today's modern society, social media has become indispensable for connecting and staying informed about various issues. One of the most pressing concerns is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted millions globally. Social media platforms offer a unique advantage to users, particularly migrants, as they can conveniently access and consolidate information related to the pandemic and its effects on their daily lives.

Furthermore, social media enables migrants to acquire official and non-official information, which can be vital in making informed decisions about their health and safety. For example, one of the interviewees emphasised how social media helped her access essential information about the large-scale social restrictions in Jakarta, allowing her to cancel her plan to return to migration with local transportation.

"After reading an important retweet from Twitter, my plan to return was cancelled even though the information is unofficial. Sometimes, unofficial information helps to reduce material loss. Maybe I will be stuck in Jakarta, unable to get to my hometown if I have not seen the tweet." (In, female, 30 years old).

The excerpt from the interview effectively highlights the crucial role that social media platforms play in providing valuable information to migrants. Especially during the ongoing pandemic, these platforms have become indispensable tools for helping migrants make informed decisions about their lives. Social media has emerged as a critical source of information, offering a wide range of insights and updates that are essential for migrants to navigate through these challenging times.

Social media has become a powerful ally in the decision-making process for individuals contemplating migration. By providing access to a wealth of information, social media platforms offer an alternative perspective to help migrants make informed choices. Research has shown that social media significantly shapes people's migration intentions and influences their movement behaviours. It is worth noting that this process is closely linked to the availability of information about the host and destination countries. Social media platforms are uniquely positioned to provide real-time updates on current conditions, making them an invaluable resource for those considering migration.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on students considering a return to Indonesia. Various factors such as university policies, immigration restrictions, incomplete study periods, unsafe conditions, geographical limitations, and social lockdowns have complicated the decision-making process. As a result, many students face uncertainty and seek guidance, regardless of their planned stay duration.]

Some students have opted to postpone their return, citing concerns about the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19, perceived governmental inadequacies, and a lack of public attention to the crisis. Others, however, view their current location as safer, attributing this to stronger healthcare systems, effective pandemic management, and lower infection rates. They may also feel safer due to stricter public health measures, higher vaccination rates, or lower community transmission.

In this unprecedented situation, deciding whether to return requires a comprehensive evaluation of situational factors and personal perceptions. There are many considerations to weigh, including the availability and quality of healthcare, access to essential services, and the ability to maintain social connections. It's crucial to acknowledge the emotional and psychological toll that this decision-making process can take, as students may experience anxiety, fear, and confusion.

To prioritize mental well-being, seeking support from friends, family, or professionals can provide clarity and reassurance. It's essential to remember that every decision should be tailored to individual circumstances, taking into account personal factors alongside the broader context of healthcare infrastructure and epidemiological conditions. By prioritizing both physical and mental health, students can navigate this challenging period with resilience and confidence.The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on students considering a return to Indonesia. Various factors such as university policies, immigration restrictions, incomplete study periods, unsafe conditions, geographical limitations, and social lockdowns have complicated the decision-making process. As a result, many students face uncertainty and seek guidance, regardless of their planned stay duration.

Some students have opted to postpone their return, citing concerns about the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19, perceived governmental inadequacies, and a lack of public attention to the crisis. Others, however, view their current location as safer, attributing this to stronger healthcare systems, effective pandemic management, and lower infection rates. They may also feel safer due to stricter public health measures, higher vaccination rates, or lower community transmission.

In this unprecedented situation, deciding whether to return requires a comprehensive evaluation of situational factors and personal perceptions. There are many considerations to weigh, including the availability and quality of healthcare, access to essential services, and the ability to maintain social connections. It's crucial to acknowledge the emotional and psychological toll that this decision-making process can take, as students may experience anxiety, fear, and confusion.

To prioritize mental well-being, seeking support from friends, family, or professionals can provide clarity and reassurance. It's essential to remember that every decision should be tailored to individual circumstances, taking into account personal factors alongside the broader context of healthcare infrastructure and epidemiological conditions. By prioritizing both physical and mental health, students can navigate this challenging period with resilience and confidence.

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