

FRIENDSHIP

REDEFINING FRIENDSHIP

an exploratory research on the impact of 'online world' to the development of friendship amongst youths in Jakarta.

I AM (CONSTANTLY) ENGAGED

A youth life in Jakarta is a life full of engagements. Their days are longer and busier than before, with formal and informal engagements. From school duties, family's tasks to (most importantly) friends' demands.

Imagine living a life of a high school teenager ... early morning waking up at 5 to 5.30 am for morning prayers, then hurrying to prepare yourself for school in less than 15 minutes. A quick - on the run - breakfast is ready with your mother nagging to finish all and drink the milk. And off you go to school before six. If you're lucky, you go to private school that starts around 7 am. But, if you're not lucky, you have to fit in a public schools schedule, that demands you to be inside the school gate before 6.30 am. So, your brain needs to function even before the sun is fully risen.

This shouldn't be a problem if you could get to bed early, like, say ... 8 pm. But, is it possible? No, if you constantly text-ing or chatting with your friends until 1 to 2 am in the morning. This is not counting the long hours school time, the full after school activities or the time that your family demands you to spend with them in front of the TV.

The university students' days in life are not so much different. Starting slightly later in the morning, or even after lunch, they fill their days with engagements, unplanned as many as planned.

The university students may not need to be as busy as high school students in fulfilling a long list of formal activities, yet, this freedom gives them more time to connect with their friends. They act like a Social En-

ergizer Bunny ... moving, playing, jumping from one place to another - and most importantly - onlining, from morning to evening. They are fully booked with or without any important things to do.

The living pattern of the youths have changed like never before. From dawn till dusk, youths are engaged. Their minds are occupied with so many external stimuli: schools and study, extra-curricular activities, courses, student organizations, teens club, gang activities, informal community gatherings, or even as light as hanging out with friends in school canteen. They can not really pin their mind into one thing. They can't and won't focus. Multitasking is the name of the game, either in class, in the bus, at home or even in public toilets.

Is that a problem? Not really. These young people are asking for it. They demand constant occupation of the mind by external stimuli. They thirst for continuous connection. They die to move their fingers and click 'enter'. They are addicted to the mechanical sound of a clicking computers. They find and invent their world using the tip of their fingers. TV is nice, but they now have a technology that allows them to truly response back. A technology that allows them to recreate their existence.

We have been social animals for centuries, but never before as intense as these youths in building, maintaining and expand-

ing social connections. The society is being recreated in the virtual world. Being connected allows them to continuously exist in their society. They are no longer home-bound individuals, and even if they are physically home, it does not mean that their mind is home-bound. The virtual world allows them to beat time and space. Creating a continuous hunger for connection.

Let's look at how some the youths that



Youths in warnet, connecting themselves with their friends and their world.

we talked to define what they like to do in their free time. Most of them, geek or popular, leader or follower, active or passive students, happily claim that being online is part of the things that they love to do, every day.



Icca, a 18 yo university student majoring in Law from B social class who loves playing guitar, hanging out with friends and **getting online with her blackberry**.



Donna, a 19 yo university students who loves hanging out with friends and boy-friends, and **staying in touch with her blackberry**.



Fariz, a 19 yo university student with scholarship who plays band, billiard, basketball, clubbing, and being active in university student community.



Andrian, a 22 yo B social class university student majoring in accountancy who prefers playing music, futsal, hang out with friends and **getting online**.



Renzy, a 22 years old law student who loves being an active member of student organizations, hanging out and **getting online with friends**.



Almayda, a 15 yo high school student who love watching movies and attending music festivals, playing basketball and **getting online from her mobile phone**.



Dede, a 16 yo public high school students who loves playing basketball, hanging out with friends and **getting online with his blackberry - especially updating status on facebook**.



Desi, a 20 yo PR student, who loves watching movies, hanging out, playing games, clubbing and **looking for hot-spot places**.



Adit, a 19 yo university student who love playing games, hanging out and **getting online from his mobile phone**.

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