

## From Learning to Earning: Investigating the Role of Social Media in Education and Employment for English Education Graduates

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**Abstract:** The massive advancement of social media has shifted some people's ways of life, including the way individuals acquire knowledge and occupation. It becomes a pivotal tool in broadening access to information, educational resources, and career opportunities. This study aims to explore social media's role in education and employment for the fresh graduates of the English Education Department (TBI) of Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Banten. A mixed method was employed in this study by conducting interviews and surveys. 14 participants who graduated from the English Education Department of UIN Banten were involved in the data collection on how the use of social media fosters learning, builds professional networks, and enhances relevant skills in labor markets. The main focus of the study is to identify how online platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and other platforms are utilized by the graduates to access teaching materials and information and broaden their professional network in language and education. The finding shows that social media substantially improves graduates' ability to find relevant jobs, build portfolios, and be well-informed about the latest developments in English education. However, the study also highlights challenges encountered by social media users to advance their digital literacy to optimize social media features as a supporting tool for education and professional growth.



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## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of technology has changed people's ways of life in so many ways, including in the education and human capital fields, which also has a huge impact on people's career opportunities and development. The role of technology as a social actor gives significant assistance in humans' life for its similarity to humans' ability to connect and build engagement with others. Its ability to build networking is even more massive since the emergence of social media. People can reach and connect with more people around the world feasibly and for varied purposes. Such as for broadening networking, learning process, marketing and branding, self-expression, trading, and career development.

Social media has been used for various purposes by people from across ages, especially the young generation. For those who have more professional goals in using social media, the ability to operate features offered at certain social media platforms is needed to optimize the result. To engage in social media, students have to own at least basic skills in IT, if the students want to unlock more advanced features of social media, students need to have a higher ability in IT (Supardi et al., 2021). Besides having the ability to operate it, the ability to maintain engagement in social media is also crucial to give more intensive and robust exposure about our profile and who we are in a professional world which can lead to more strong relations among social media users.

Impacts also happen to the world of education. Social media has changed the way people acquire knowledge. The classroom is no longer the only place to study and gain insight since social media also provides unlimited access to various educational content, such as tutorial videos, articles, and online discussion forums. YouTube Instagram and TikTok are famous for their educational content including language-related materials. Users utilize social media to improve their language skills, such as vocabulary mastery, pronunciation, culture, and grammar learning through authentic text (Fauziah et al., 2023).

Besides, social media provides opportunities for students to be involved in collaborative learning by connecting students with a global community. Through discussion forums such as on Facebook or other virtual communities, students can exchange ideas, share learning materials, and collaborate across cultural projects (Al-Rahmi et al., 2015). This process not only helps users improve their language proficiency but also trains them to think more critically and to work in a team. In the context of learning English in Indonesia, social media has been an important tool to practice their English skills. Maintaining online engagement on social media for educational purposes leads students to be more ready to face real-life and job demands after they graduate. Their ability to maintain engagement and optimize features on social media can be a big help for them to get employed more easily due to the changes in the job market as well.

Social media has experienced a shift in function in the employment landscape. Siddik et al., (2024a) mentioned that significant transformations have been undergone in the landscape of recruitment in recent years, driven by technological advancements, shifting workforce demographics, and global events such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Joshi (2018) stated that “social media profiles play a crucial role in the recruitment of applicants. Hence, it is important to maintain a good image in individual profiles. Employers look at these social media profiles to assess the candidates”.

Various information related to job opportunities is easily discovered. Mowbray & Hall (2021) suggested that “Social media are powerful networking platforms that provide users with significant information opportunities “. Through the online world, people can engage in limitless connection and collaboration, including between job seekers and recruiters. The recent growth of online social networks has enabled job seekers to stay connected with all of their acquaintances. Garg, R., & Telang, R. (2012) stated that “People who are looking for jobs, increasingly use many social media platforms to create and share content, engage in conversations, and network with professionals, all of which can significantly impact their chances of securing employment. Platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and TikTok are not just avenues for social interaction but are essential for professional networking, sharing expertise,

and establishing visibility in competitive job markets”. In the digital age, job searchers might benefit greatly from using any social media platform. Building contacts, finding new employment prospects, and establishing a solid professional reputation and presence may all be accomplished with the help of social media (Weiner, W.H. 2016)

As the workforce becomes more digitally integrated, the importance of maintaining a strong online presence has never been more evident. Employers now regularly assess candidates’ digital footprints, including their social media profiles and online activity, to gauge their fit for a role. Job seekers with a robust online presence often have an advantage in the hiring process, as they are seen as proactive and capable of leveraging modern technology for professional growth. This shift emphasizes the growing need for individuals to strategically manage their online engagement in ways that enhance their employability.

Subsequently, this research is important because it offers a more thorough understanding of the role of social media in preparing new graduates to face challenges in the world of work, especially in the field of English education. The findings from this study can be valuable input for higher education institutions, lecturers, and students in optimizing the use of social media, not only as a learning tool, but also as a strategy in skill development and job search. This research is also expected to be a reference for graduates to be more creative and strategic in utilizing social media to build a competitive advantage in the job market.

#### Research Questions:

This research seeks to explore the relationship between online learning, engagement, and job opportunities, examining how various online activities influence individuals’ readiness acquired through online learning and employment opportunities acquired by online engagement in today’s interconnected job market. Therefore, the research questions are as follows:

1. How do English education graduates use social media to support the learning process?
2. What type of online engagement contributes to the development of academic and professional skills?
3. What are the English graduate students’ perceptions of the role of social media in enhancing their career opportunities?

## **METHOD**

### *a. Research Design*

This study employs an embedded mixed-method design, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to explore participants’ online engagement and their career opportunities gained by actively getting involved in online exposure. Bastable, E., Meng, P., Falcon, S.F., & McIntosh, K. (2019) stated that “An embedded mixed methods design was used to assess and improve the acceptability of an equity-focused intervention for school discipline”. In this study, the qualitative data is presented as primary data. The researcher conducts interviews to gain more in-depth relevant information related to the participants’ experience in utilizing social media related to intensity, varied platforms, and online training which has been used to improve their professional lives.

A survey was conducted to collect quantitative data, focusing on the graduates' online engagement, job search strategies and their viewpoints on how actively participating in social media influences job opportunities. involving structured surveys using questionnaires. Preston, V. (2020) mentioned that statistical data from a population can be acquired from questionnaire surveys through a structured set of questions. The questionnaire survey will not be successfully implemented unless the participants have the capacity and knowledge related to the topic of the questions. It is only suitable for gathering certain types of data for specific groups of people. Therefore, the research participants in this study are 14 fresh graduates from English Education Department of UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanudin Banten from two different classes, namely Class TBI A and B. They are considered as digital natives who massively use technology in their lives, including those related to their career development.

*b. Research Instrument*

a. Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a data collection tool used in research to collect information from respondents through a series of structured questions. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2018) conveyed that the questionnaire is helpful in obtaining standardized and open responses from a huge sample and population, collecting data in a cheap, reliable, valid, and fast way. The questionnaire is designed to obtain specific and relevant data regarding respondents' opinions, attitudes, knowledge, or behavior. In this study, the questionnaire was used to collect data of students' perception of the use of social media and their engagement towards the opportunity to get hired.

The questionnaire in this study involved two parts: the first part focused on respondents' personal information, such as name, and their current working place. the second part was concerned with the situation that students' preference in using social media and related online platforms and students' feelings about their active participation in the digital world, which consisted of 30 items and was categorized into four big themes as described in the table below. The questionnaire was in the form of a five-likert scale (Strongly disagree, Disagree, neutral, Agree, and Strongly agree). Mangold (2008) declared that Likert scale is most frequently employed to assess personal perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and emotion, commonly constructed as five-point scales (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly agree) to discover students' experience in social media engagement and the benefit for their professional careers.

b. Interview

Interview is a data collection method that involves a conversation between an interviewer and a respondent (interviewee) to obtain information, views, or understanding on a particular topic. Utibe Monday (2020) argued that "Interviews are a powerful data collection instrument in social science research, but should be used alongside other methods for richer and more validated findings. interview as a tool for social science data collection research helps to facilitate in obtaining direct explanation for human actions through a comprehensive speech interaction". This process allows the interviewer to explore and clarify the information collected in a more in-depth and interactive way compared to other data collection methods such as questionnaires or surveys. The interview is one of the

common ways used to collect qualitative data (Wang, 2018), which enables a deeper comprehension of respondents' perceptions and opinions (Shijing, 2021).

The researcher interviewed five participants who just graduated in 2024 from the English education department of Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Banten who are currently teaching English in different schools, cities, and levels of education. The big themes are related to the most used social media for job-seeking journeys, the advantage of actively engaging in digital platforms, the challenges of applying for jobs online, and suggestions for other job seekers who are also graduates from the same department.

#### c. Data Analysis

The analysis of case study data involves identifying patterns and themes that emerge from the collected information (Creswell, 2007). Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach in accordance with the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), namely: Recognizing data, creating initial, searching for themes by grouping codes into potential themes, reviewing themes, naming and defining themes, compiling a final report that presents the findings with direct quotes from the data.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The interviews revealed several important points emphasizing how online engagement influences participants' skill development related to their expertise and job opportunities. Participants shared their experiences participating on social media by doing various online activities including improving their skills through digital platforms which positively affect their careers' journeys. This section presents a succinct analysis of these themes, emphasizing the role of online presence, networking, and content creation in shaping their employability.

### A. Social Media Activity Span

Social media has been a pervasive technological tool that is excessively used by users. People tend to lose control when they start using it due to the engagement and entertainment offered by social media. It is indeed because social media platforms are designed to be addictive, incentivizing prolonged user engagement through techniques such as compelling goals, unpredictable positive feedback, and strong social connections (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021). However, it also provides advantageous content that can contribute to its users' successful lives. For instance in professional contexts. It provides immediate access to information, facilitates networking, and allows for real-time communication and engagement with large audiences (Cleary et al., 2013).

Based on the interview result on the duration or time allocation for each interviewee in engaging in social media in general in a day, the participants seemed not convinced about how much time they spent utilizing social media or other online platforms at the first stage, however, some of them finally revealed that the time allocated for engaging in social media depends on the time. In the typical working days, they spend 4 to 5 hours a day, yet they spend more than that during weekends or days off. It exceeds way too much from the suggested time spent on social media. According to a study, 2 hours engaged with social

media is the maximum. Walton & Rizzolo (2022) suggest that spending more than two hours per day on social media is associated with negative emotional health outcomes.

A participant named Sri mentioned “ If I have a holiday, I usually have more time to play social media which is 4 to 5 hours or more mostly, but I don't mean all at once. for example, later in the morning I was interrupted, anyway, but it must be calculated for a day, it can be that much if it's not a holiday, I don't use social media that much because I am busy”.

Different from Sri and other participants, Nurhaliza mentioned that she spent approximately 6 to 7 hours per day, irrespective of the time. She was intensively engaged with online platforms both on working days and weekends. Because even information related to her workload and new tasks as a teacher is also spread through social media. For her, even during working time, she still needs to engage in the digital world since job-related information is also available there.

“ I use social media around 7 hours per day,” she stated. When the interviewer confirmed the timing, she added that there was no difference between weekends and weekdays due to the reason mentioned earlier.

Based on the data acquired from the participants, it means that the average time of their online activities per day is approximately 5 hours, which hugely exceeds the ideal time spent to maintain humans' well-being. Hunt et al., (2021) discovered that having maximally 30 minutes of social media exposure per day could nurture quality of life which is related to health improvement, satisfaction, and comfort. Therefore, intensive use of social media could lead to negative impacts.

## B. Social Media for Educational Purposes

Social media has been an impactful tool for learning. Students utilize online platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook to sharpen their knowledge related to their field to acquire more information and discuss issues in the field. Yogev et al., (2015) mention that social media enables expertise identification by allowing individuals to share their knowledge and experiences publicly, which helps in honing their skills.

For the students who are studying in the English education department use social media to enhance their vocabulary, grammar, English teaching strategy, and create teaching materials. With interactive and accessible features, social media provides a more engaging, flexible learning process that is more relevant to the needs of nowadays era. Social media can significantly improve language skills by providing interactive and engaging environments that enhance language acquisition and proficiency (Usup & Purwaningsih, 2024).

### - Learning Vocabulary, Grammar, and Practicing Speaking Skills through TikTok

Sriyanti mentioned that TikTok has become her favorite online platform to sharpen her English skills. She enjoyed watching TikTok accounts which provide English-related content, such as vocabulary mastery and grammar discussion.

“TikTok contents help me to learn new words and grammar in a fun way so that I can remember them easily. The short videos also make me more engaged and do not feel bored”

She also added that on Tiktok she could practice her Speaking skills because there are many live streamers that provide rooms for practicing English. She felt more confident and comfortable practicing her speaking on online platforms.

“actually, practicing my speaking on TikTok makes me more relaxed because I know they do not know me, so I am not afraid if they judge my English skill”

- Instagram for Teaching Inspiration

Ulhiyati shared her experience of utilizing Instagram to seek inspiration in creating teaching materials and teaching activities. For her, Instagram helped her to find ideas to develop her teaching skills. She could find content related to creative and engaging ways of teaching English. As a fresh graduate, she was in dire need of references to enrich her teaching skills, and she found them on Instagram.

“I follow educational accounts, particularly related to English. Such as accounts from English courses in Pare, they often share useful material on developing teaching material and activities to keep students engaged”.

- YouTube for Deeper Understanding

Disya mentioned that YouTube is the most used platform for learning grammar and teaching strategies. She argued that she gained a deeper understanding of grammar by watching YouTube because the video duration on YouTube is relatively long so she could get comprehensive knowledge compared to TikTok or Instagram which mostly present short videos. On YouTube, tips and strategies for teaching English also are discussed thoroughly from the very first step to the end of the teaching and learning process.

“Videos on YouTube usually give an in-depth explanation, even sometimes they also provide teaching simulation which greatly helps me as a novice English teacher.”

- Webinar for Improving Teaching Skills

Irma explained that joining online seminars on digital platforms is greatly impactful for her career achievement. By getting involved in English-related webinars she gained countless knowledge on how to teach students from various backgrounds. It helped her land her dream job as an English teacher at one of the prestigious schools in Bogor. She argued that her achievement now was due to her teaching performance in micro-teaching sessions during the recruitment process. She was well-equipped because she was actively involved in many webinars and enrichment programs for English teachers virtually.

“I learned many teaching new methods, especially technology-based teaching from webinars that I joined. They help me to figure out how to integrate technology in the classroom”

Combining Online Platforms to Optimize the Learning Process

Nurhaliza emphasized that each platform has its strengths and uniqueness. Combining them could give an optimum result in the learning process. She used all of the platforms based on her moods and situation. When she had plenty of time, she preferred to watch YouTube and gained a deeper comprehension of the materials learned. But when she was in a packed

schedule and sometimes had a bad mood, she used Instagram or Tik Tok to watch short reels because they were more entertaining, especially when she faced unpleasant days.

“TikTok and Instagram are good for short and fun learning because they provide interesting visuals and sounds. However, if you want to have a deeper understanding and you have free time, YouTube would be best”

The result of the interviews above shows that social media become a beneficial learning tool for the graduates of TBI UIN Banten as Generation Z who are very close to technology.

### C. Virtual Employment-Seeking Strategies and Networking

Despite the disadvantages of social media, it also offers a plethora of advantages. One of them is networking and information on social media which can lead to employment. There are some of the most impactful online activities that help participants land their dream jobs. According to Kunasagaram & Anthony Samy (2020), social media is particularly helpful for fresh graduates since it emphasizes the dual-use of social media by employers, not only for attracting candidates but also for strengthening connections with potential applicants.

As graduates from English education department, they have their own ways to showcase their skills on social media to attract potential recruiters so that they are well-informed about the competencies of the applicants. They frequently post stories either on Instagram or Facebook by using captions in English which according to Sri becomes one of the positive externalities. Some of her friends often try to find the meaning of the written caption on her posts out of curiosity. Sri states:

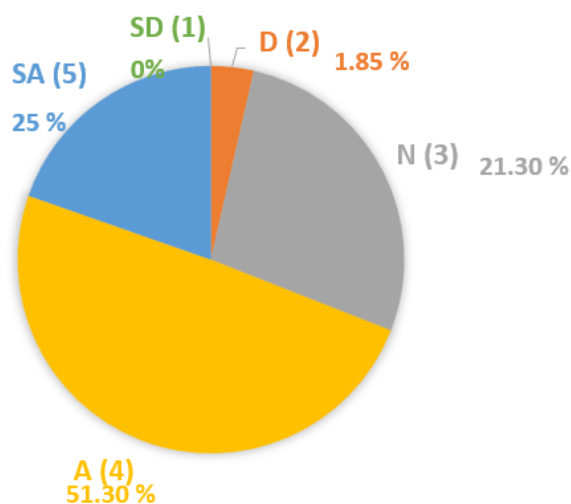
“the fun fact is sometimes my friends try to open the dictionary or Google translate just to understand my caption in my stories”

Furthermore, posting a story with English songs as the background is also one of the ways to showcase their expertise because it makes people realize that she is passionate about English and advanced in English due to the assumption that she fully understands the song lyrics posted. As big fans of Instagram, respondents also write their bios in English to build an image of who they are.

Besides gaining attention from formal recruiters, respondents also gain attention from people around them. Some neighbors who are friends on social media ask them to be English tutors for their kids which is also a good opportunity to have teaching experience before landing in their dream jobs. Posting photos or videos when they conduct teaching activities is beneficial. Irma argues that exposing people to activities which is related to her expertise improves the trust of the recruiters or users as she is perceived as an experienced one in her field.

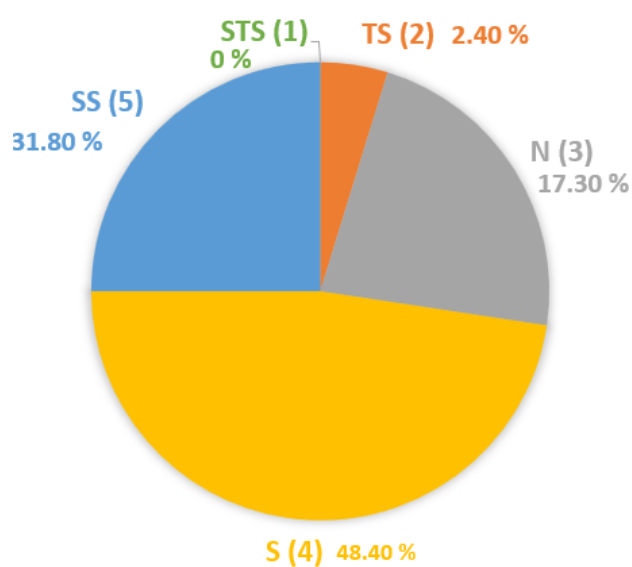
Building broader network and relationship is also one the most obvious benefits of being active participants on social media. People can connect to more people and collaborate more easily. Based on the interview related to participants experience of how they strengthen their network through digital platforms is positively impactful. They use social media such as Instagram, Tiktok, WhatsApp and other professional platforms like LinkedIn, Kita Lulus and Glints to broaden their outreach both locally and globally.

Figure 1. Online Job-seeking Activities



Based on Figure 1, it is seen that of 14 respondents involved in the surveys, 77% of them are active on social media and other digital platforms to get employed by actively engaging in online forum discussion, online job fairs, and joining webinars to acquire some information related to job vacancy. They also update their work profile on online platforms, such as Linked In, Kita Lulus, and Glints to make it easier when they apply the jobs. In addition, searching for information about the companies that open recruitment is also seen as something crucial to do before applicants submit their job application to discover what to expect and what to prepare.

Figure 2. Broadening Network



The data presented in Figure 2 is almost similar to those in Figure 1. Approximately one-third of participants agreed that social media and other digital platforms strongly contribute to their process of broadening their network. They build relationships with professionals in their field through online communication, maintaining relationships with peers who might later become the cause of the participant landing the jobs, and participating in online discussions, such as on TikTok Live streaming.

#### D. Social Media for Job-searching, Skill Development, and Personal Branding

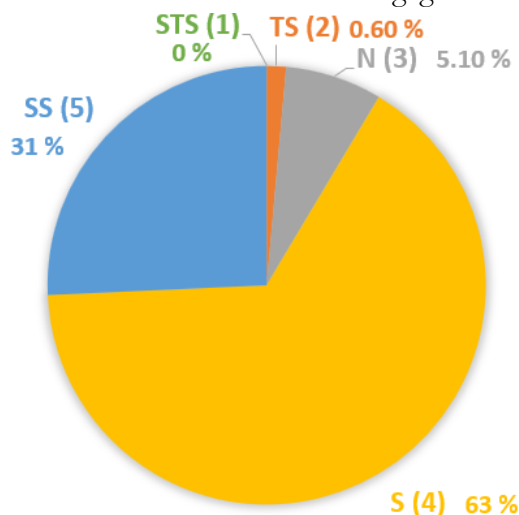
##### Most Beneficial Social Media for Job-Seeking

Besides being popular for entertainment purposes, Instagram is also viewed as a beneficial platform for job seekers, especially those from the Gen Z era. Most participants mentioned it first in regard to its affordance in searching for job opportunities.

Irma said that she used to intensively use Instagram during her search for employment by following several accounts related to Job agencies as well as following some institutions' accounts which she was interested in, hoping that she would gain information once the institutions opened job vacancies. Ulhiyati and Nurhaliza also had similar experiences. They mentioned that Instagram was the most used social media to find information related to job opportunities. She perceived that Instagram is a trusted resource due to its ability to connect potential employees with recruiters and check the validity of the vacancies advertised by visiting Instagram institutions' accounts. She added because most schools have Instagram accounts and by checking the respective accounts, job seekers can validate the information either by trying to discover the job recruitment on the page or contacting the admin of the account to confirm the information.

Sriyanti, however also mentioned TikTok in the second position after Instagram. She perceived that TikTok also provided quite massive information related to job opportunities. She also emphasizes that even reading comments on Tiktok helped her to find more information related to the job offered "Sometimes when I want to ask some questions about the jobs, some netizens have already asked and got the answers from the recruiter". Disya has a different perspective on Tiktok, she mentioned that Tiktok is less reliable than Instagram. Some fake job recruitments were mostly on TikTok but not on Instagram.

Figure 3. The Benefit of Online Engagement



Among other aspects on the survey, data presented in Figure 3 has the highest percentage of positive responses which is about how online engagements influence participants' professional careers. More than 80 % of participants agree that online activities help them find job vacancies which they would not have known before, had they not actively participated in social media. Therefore they perceive that being active on social media is essential today because the recruiters post the vacancies on social media so that the applicants can discover them easily.

#### Skill Development

Getting involved in several webinars or online training related to English teachings has a tangible contribution to their job-searching journey. By joining such online activities, participants feel more confident in applying for jobs due to the skills and knowledge gained. Sriyanti shared her experience joining a webinar related to Teaching English to kids. As a graduate of the English education department, the material acquired from the webinar made her well-informed and confident in performing teaching. She felt more well-prepared and ready to compete with other job seekers who are in the same field.

Similarly, Ulhiyati, also perceived engagement in a webinar, either with other participants or the speakers, as advantageous for having more opportunities to get hired. Some webinars usually invite the participants to one WhatsApp group, which is a good opportunity to connect and share information related to job opportunities in the English field. Ulhiyati also added that by joining the webinars or online training they get a certificate of involvement.

"We usually receive a certificate after joining a webinar or online training which will be useful for our success in looking for jobs as we can attach or write our involvement on our CV"

Nurhaliza once joined a teaching webinar conducted by the researcher. She mentioned that it enlightened her on how to teach English to kids, teens, and adults. Knowing different approaches to teaching different levels of learners increases her self-efficacy in teaching any level of learners.

Disya, on the other hand, mentioned that could also improve her English skills by watching video contents on social media, like Instagram.

“scrolling on Instagram also had a big impact on developing my English skills because many accounts are discussing English, like for communication or teaching”

#### Personal Branding

Nowadays when the world's level of competitiveness is getting stronger, building a good self image is pivotal to having a successful life. Personal branding is known as the process of showing one's abilities for various purposes in positive ways. Even sometimes it is misunderstood- some perceive it as the act of showing off- however, irrespective of the other users' perception, personal branding has a huge impact on someone's career pursuit.

Sriyanti argued that personal branding on social media is a must, especially for fresh graduates who have not had a lot of experience yet in teaching English or doing other professional activities.

“Personal branding is very important, moreover for three kinds of people, first just graduate, second do not have any experience, and do not have any privilege knowing anyone in charge in a certain field, the only way to save their lives is to build personal branding”.

Ulhiyati also mentioned that posting videos or pictures when she was teaching was one of the best ways to showcase her skills. According to her, recruiters also surf the applicants' social media to discover some related information to the jobs. By consistently posting activities related to her expertise, she is optimistic that she can have more options in terms of choosing her dream job.

Figure 4. Skill Development and Personal Branding

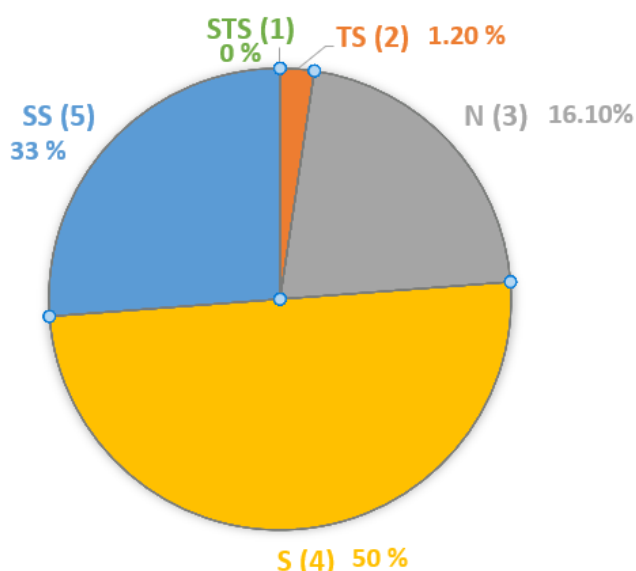


Figure 4 describes the role of online engagement in developing participants' skills and building a self-image. 80 % of participants conveyed that using online platforms to showcase their skills can help potential employers recognize their strengths. They also join online activities to elevate their English and teaching skills to answer the demand from recruiters. Then they use the certificates received from the online activities to support their application by writing them on the Curriculum Vitae or attaching them to the file if it is required.

## CONCLUSION

Knowledge acquisition and job searching processes nowadays are not as arduous as they used to be. The sophistication of technology manifested in digital tools like social media has changed the nature of learning and job-seeking from a traditional classroom concept and recruitment stage to a modern process of knowledge and skill development and talent acquisition that strongly integrates online participation. The findings show that social media is actively used by students and graduates to strengthen the learning process, especially in improving English language skills. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram provide access to authentic and interactive content that helps with vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation and understanding the cultural context of English.

Their engagement in online activities, such as taking part in English speaking challenges, creating educational content and joining learning communities, directly contributes to the development of academic and soft skills. It also strengthens their confidence, creativity and communication skills - all important aspects for the world of work.

Aside from learning, social media is also used by graduates as a means to build personal branding and expand professional networks. Through platforms such as LinkedIn and Instagram, they can showcase their skills, promote their services or portfolio, and access information on job opportunities. This suggests that engagement in social media not only supports the learning process, but also improves their readiness to enter the workforce more confidently and competitively.

Thus, it can be concluded that there is a strong relationship between online learning, social media engagement and work readiness. Various online activities provide meaningful learning experiences while preparing graduates to face the challenges of the digital job market. Therefore, the strategic use of social media needs to be encouraged in both education and career development.

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