Reading buddy: the Indonesian gen Z and millennials bookstagram's virtual communication practice

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Abstract Reading activities have shifted to social media platforms. Despite Indonesia having a low reading habit worldwide, it is expanding rapidly among millennial and Gen Z bookstagrammers. This study explores the meaning of 'reading buddy', motivations for engaging in virtual 'reading buddy' activities, emotional intimacy, habits and continuity of virtual communication with reading buddy partners. Using a cyberphenomenology approach, this study involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ten (10) Indonesian millennials and Z generation bookstagrammers by applying Barry Wellman's Networked Individualism Theory. This study's cyberphenomenology data analysis technique refers to the coding colour analysis procedure (CCAP). The study results show that a reading buddy is interpreted as a friend who reads books together, a sharing friend, and community outreach activities. It is known that the shift in social interaction from groups to individuals has opened up opportunities for virtual community bookstagrammers on Instagram to create interests that are appropriate for personal networks. In the reading buddy activities carried out, this is believed to enrich the reading experience while improving communication and literacy skills. Instagram is essential in positively impacting interpersonal relationships, personal development, and individual knowledge, especially among the younger generation who like to read books.

Keywords: bookstagram engagement; cyberphenomenology approach; networked individualism theory

INTRODUCTION

In 2024, global internet users reached 5.44 billion (Petrosyan, 2024), shaping the internet as a virtual communication space. Indonesia landed on 4th place in the world for the number of Instagram users, with around 103.3 million users (Annur, 2023). Evidently, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms because it allows users to share image and video content and communicate with others who share the same interests and tastes (Dutta & Sharma, 2023; Kozharinova & Manovich, 2024).

For more than two decades in the digital era, social media has had huge leaps and formed many online communities (Dutta & Sharma, 2023), including the book reading community. Virtual and real communities have similar features, yet virtual communities can adopt traditional characteristics, resulting in convergent communities with significant emotional involvement (Sharkov & Kirillina, 2022). Despite of the booming growth of virtual communities, social media has been widely utilised to practice and celebrate 'bookishness', particularly the love of reading printed books as part of everyday life (Ensslin et al., 2023). The number of Instagram users who enjoy reading is increasing rapidly, leading to the growth of a community of readers and book lovers in this virtual space (Witari, 2023). As a result, the terms 'bookstagram' and 'bookstagrammer' have become more widely known.

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Bookstagram, according to Carly Jessup, is an Instagram account explicitly dedicated to books, also commonly used as a hashtag for bookworm Instagram posts (Jessup, 2024). Bookstagram has also been compared as a tidy and well-organised Instagram subculture filled with pictures of books, stacks of books, and book lovers reading books (Borrelli, 2019).

Bookstagrammers' efforts to maintain interaction by sharing, talking and discussing books have formed the identity of the bookstagram community (Darma et al., 2020). In this context, accessing social media platforms by scrolling can create an atmosphere where users feel immersed in a particular theme, even if the theme is particular (Maddox & Gill, 2023), including books. Each bookstagrammer is able to give a brief review of the books he or she is currently reading (Thomas, 2021), through Instagram. The term 'bookstagram' itself has recently become popular among Generation Z and millennial book readers in Indonesia, with a number of posts hashtagged '#bookstagram' reaching 109 million and '#bookstagramindonesia' reaching 420 thousand posts, as of October 2024.

Nowadays, teenagers are hardly separated from active interaction with social media which shapes their virtual socialisation, therefore personal media culture and reading culture have become important aspects of their education (Kovalova, 2023). Individuals between the ages of 13 and 28 are commonly referred to as Generation Z, while the millennial generation is associated with those aged 25 to 34 (Daffa Albani et al., 2024; Escandon-Barbosa & Salas-Paramo, 2024). Generation Z is the largest generation group in Indonesia, with 27.94% of the total population or 74.93 million people (IDN Research Institute, 2022). According to a survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in December 2023-January 2024, 51.9% of Indonesian Generation Z often access Instagram while 74.09% of Indonesian millennials often access Facebook (Ahdiyat, 2024), where Instagram and Facebook are products of Meta that are interconnected. This generation is known to be independent, passionate about entrepreneurship, altruistic, internally motivated, and has a short attention span (Jayatissa, 2023), thus, these influence their communication style, particularly in virtual communication.

With such numbers, Instagram facilitates their virtual communication in the growing bookishness trend. This type of relationship, known as an Online Social Network (OSN), is highly significant in everyday life since it allows users to self-expression, social pleasure, and the opportunity to build a network (Amelia & Wibowo, 2023). In the increasingly widespread development of the bookstagram community on Instagram, a bookstagrammer meets other bookstagrammers online and a friendship connection in reading flows naturally, forming an attachment, commonly called a 'reading buddy'.

The cultural phenomenon of reading with a reading buddy that is growing among the Indonesian bookstagram community, especially millennial and Z generation users, is a unique idea considering the very low interest in reading among Indonesian people. As reported in the Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia's website, UNESCO stated that Indonesia has the second lowest ranking in global literacy rate with a reading interest of only 0.001%, implying only one in every 1,000 Indonesians read diligently (Devega, 2017). Meanwhile, the challenges of 21st-century education require reading skills, which involve perceiving, analysing and interpreting writing to understand the author's message (Nidia et al., 2024).

Existing research addresses reading culture by exploring social media posts that have the potential to mediate book and reading culture among Australian youth (Dezuanni et al., 2022). Others' research on reading culture among teenagers on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and video streaming platforms like YouTube concluded that social networks have a significant influence on teenagers' reading activities and preferences, in the same manner Instagram's role as a tool for developing teenage reading culture (Kovalova, 2023; Kovalova & Shalman, 2024). In the context of virtual communication, similar research explores various topics, including virtual communication among college students, virtual communication to increase awareness of the climate crisis, and supervisor-subordinate power from an organisational communication perspective (Dhunnoo et al., 2023; Fachry et al., 2024; Mao et al., 2024). This research also examines virtual communication through the standpoint of Networked Individualism Theory. Similar research has explored networked individualism in Malaysian families, minority languages in the era of networked individualism, and research and teaching for digital media literacy (Cunliffe, 2021; Hopkins, 2020; Overstreet, 2020).

From the studies that have been conducted, we see that there are other functions of the bookstagram community. So that it not only influences the culture and reading preferences of teenagers but also becomes a means of communicating virtually with online friends who have similar reading preferences. There has been no research related to virtual communication, or the application of the theories referred to in discussing this phenomenon.

The purpose of this study on bookstagrammers' virtual communication experiences in carrying out read-buddy activities on Instagram is to explore how millennial and Z generation bookstagrammers from Indonesia interpret the meaning of the term 'reading buddy', the motivation behind the decision to engage in virtual 'reading buddy' activities, emotional intimacy, habits, and their continued virtual communication with their reading buddy partner. Overall, this study attempted to determine how a book page being read can assist someone meet friends and engage in similar activities virtually through the Instagram platform.

This research about virtual communication experiences can enrich scientific references related to reading culture in the digital era. Moreover, this research can introduce subcultures on social media, especially the bookstagrammer community, which is increasingly growing and becoming a valid reference for literacy activists in campaigning interest in reading books in Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses cyberphenomenolgy approach to explore the experience of bookstagrammers' book reading activities with virtual reading buddies on the Instagram social media platform. According to Bungin (2023), cyberphenomenology is a novel study method that integrates the principles of phenomenology with the study of technology and the digital environment to comprehend human experience in the digital age. Cyberphenomenolgy examines people's life experiences that occur in cybercommunity (Bungin, 2023). Therefore, this method and approach were chosen to acquire the readers depth of experience who show themselves as bookstagrammers in the bookstagram community on Instagram.

The research data collection technique used in this study was a systematic and flexible semi-structured in-depth interview, allowing for the development of questions based on the interviewee's answers to obtain more detailed information (Creswell, 2014). This research was conducted on ten (10) bookstagrammers who frequently (or have at least done three times) virtual reading activities with other bookstagrammers, aged 19 to 31 years, which are generation Z and millennials. The selection of the number of informants refers to the Creswell & Poth's (2018) statement if phenomenological research investigates the lived experiences of individuals or groups who have experienced a phenomenon, a heterogeneous group of 10 to 15 people is required, or data saturation is reached. These informants were selected based on our pre-research data and observations in the Bookstagram cybercommunity. They were selected because they were experienced in carrying out reading buddy activities and had a deep understanding of and relationship with these activities. Each source will be given an anonymous identity code so that their real identities are not revealed in this research. Data related to the informants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research informants

| No	Code	Initials name	Years (Olds)	Domicile
1	P01	H	19	Semarang
2	P02	C	27	Banda Aceh
3	P03	A	25	Denpasar
4	P04	L	27	Denpasar
5	P05	T	25	Palembang
6	P06	N	31	Jakarta
7	P07	P	26	Surakarta
8	P08	S	23	Bandung
9	P09	F	19	Samarinda
10	P10	D	20	Makassar

Source: Author (2024)

The cyberphenomenology data analysis technique used refers to the Coding Colour Analysis Procedure (CCAP) (Bungin, 2023), by noting down important things, making research transcripts of interview results obtained from informants in cyber community, coding the data

obtained, giving colour to the coding and short phrases, making categorisations (typification), determining the theme of the research findings, and making memos to find the relationship between one theme and another. Last, the author describes the research results that represent the informants' experiences from the interviews (Moustakas, 1994).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
This study examines how the informants share their personal experiences in conducting virtual communication with a reading buddy to form a relationship through reading activities together. This study uses a cyberphenomenology research approach and a series of data analysis techniques conducted to explore the experiences and meanings of the informants in establishing virtual friendships and reading culture in this digital era. This research produced the following typification which are shown in figure 1. Figure 1 explains the typification of reading buddy from the research results and discussion.
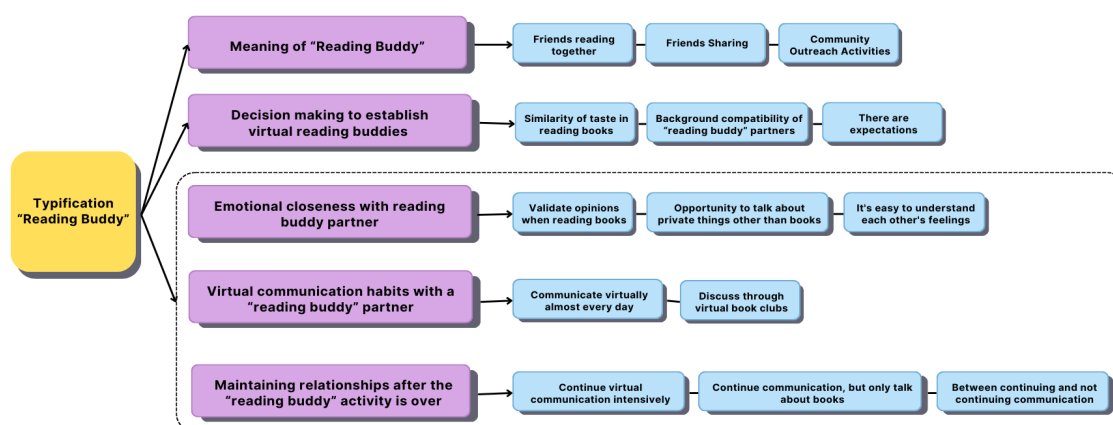
Figure 1 Typification of reading buddy
(Source: Author processed, 2024)

Meaning of 'reading buddy' term
Experts put forward no specific definition; 'reading buddy' is a term that appears in the subculture of the Bookstagram community on the Instagram platform. Through language mixing, globally, social and community developments have contributed to new language variations and new terms (Luhulima et al., 2024). The research showed several meanings of the 'reading buddy' term from Indonesian bookstagrammers, which consist of reading companion, sharing companion, and the activity of 'mingling' with the community.

Reading companion
In interpreting the meaning of 'reading buddy', several informants came up with a meaning based on translation or literal meaning, into 'reading buddy'. According to informant P05, reading buddy is an activity with friends on the same frequency in reading. He added, "Reading buddies is a special facility for me to get the same frequency of friends as well as a place for me to explore the book I am reading further, plus add new perspectives from the book I am reading".

Meanwhile, P08 stated that, "Reading buddy becomes a motivator for him to finish the book he has started reading, as well as the buddy becomes a discussion partner, and a 'bestie' (best friend)". More specifically, P06 stated that, "reading buddy is an activity of reading together to get a lot of new views from a book that is being read together at that moment".

From this category, reading buddy can be interpreted as an activity of reading with friends who have the same interests, which not only adds friends on the same frequency but also deepens the understanding of the book being read. In addition, reading buddy functions as an encouragement to finish the book, become a discussion partner, and become a true friend in the reading process. This activity also provides many new perspectives on the book being read together.

Sharing companion

In the reading together journey, the two bookstagrammers who do the reading buddy activity will have virtual communication with a certain time frequency, thus opening up the opportunity to become virtual friends who become a sharing companion for each other. P02 believes that a reading buddy is a reading companion who is also a sharing companion, especially as a place to pour out thoughts when finding a surprising, happy, or annoying scene in a book. He added, "A friend who can be invited to exchange views, especially because every person has a different understanding in responding to issues or phenomena (in a book they read) ".

Similar to the previous opinion, P03 emphasised the aspect of sharing interests in reading activities and exchanging opinions, also criticisms of the same book, and P04 stated that reading buddies become friends who are fun discussion partners and understand the anxiety in reading. In more detail, P07 stated that the presence of reading companion makes the experience of reading a book is becoming more exciting:

> "We can directly share what we are reading. We learn more about other people's perspectives on the readings we are currently reading. That way, our insight increases not only from books, but also from other people's opinions. I also become more enthusiastic about finishing my reading if I have a reading partner. Usually, when I read alone, I tend to get distracted by other things, so it takes longer to finish." (P07, 11 June 2024)

From this category, it is shown that a reading buddy is a reading companion who becomes a place to share thoughts and feelings, like surprise, joy, or annoyance in reading, emphasising the aspect of sharing interests and exchanging opinions and criticisms about the same book, finally it makes the reading experience more exciting and having a friend who understands the anxiety and fun things to discuss.

Connectivity in online communities influences individual knowledge contribution and growth more than communality (Liao et al., 2024). This means that the interactions that happen among the bookstagram community enable the freedom to develop themselves by sharing with each other. According to the results of the study, someone shares their emotions on social media based on their perceptions and habits (M. Choi & Toma, 2022).

Community outreach activities

In addition to being a reading buddy and sharing buddy, reading buddy is also a term that is interpreted as an activity of connecting with friends who share similar interests in a virtual community. This community offers broader benefits, such as specific information, socializing with similar people, and exposure from a wider audience (TeBlunthuis et al., 2022). Sharing knowledge in virtual communities, promoted through voluntary participation, mutual benefit and collective cooperation (Siudikienė & Jokūbauskienė, 2023), as in the bookstagrammaer community.

P01 stated that reading buddy is a phrase that forms a close relationship with bookstagrammers fellow, "Not only reading, but also being able to share with each other, giving each other feedback and reviews (of the books they read). From there we can feel the bond with other people and the reading community'. Reading together also encourages engagement in literature, increases academic achievement, and social mobility (Spierenburg, 2021). Involvement in literature includes consuming literary products and reviewing literary works. Social mobility among bookstagrammers is seen from the activities of reading, reviewing, creating content, and sharing it on Instagram, as well as the desire to connect with virtual community members.

Decision making to establish virtual reading buddies' activity

Certain motivations are needed to establish a virtual reading buddy activity. From the experiences of millennial and Z generation bookstrammers, several reasons were revealed, such as similar tastes in books, compatibility of partner backgrounds, and the expectation that the relationship will be going well.

Similar taste in books
From the results of the observations made, the 'reading buddy' activity is carried out based on books' similarity. Virtual communication based on comparable reading subjects leads to friendship in cyberspace and builds as the foundation for rather deep discussion. In order to validate the results of observations on the virtual bookstagram community formed on Instagram, the statements of the informants can almost be claimed to be similar and consistent.

P03 emphasised that the same reading taste with the 'reading buddy' partner was the main thing that made this virtual communication activity spontaneous. P04 added that this reading similarity happens by chance, supported by similar book tastes, so that conversations ran smoothly. One example was expressed by P05, who highlighted the spontaneity and good conversation with his 'reading buddy' partner. From initially communicating randomly, he and his friend read George Orwell's *Animal Farm* together, virtually, as well as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Almost similar statement, P08 found one of her bookstagram friends contacted her because of the book similarity she was reading, *Malice* by Keigo Higashino. Eventually, she and her friend decided to become a 'reading buddy' couple. While P06 stated that this kind of interaction can happen by accessing the Instagram story feature and finding similarities in the books being read, or it can also because of similarities in favourite book genres with other bookstagrammers. This activity does not select anyone, as long as the book being read is the same book. Meanwhile, P02 explained further in his statement:

"With the "reading buddy" activity, allow me to open up my points of view regarding the books I read. During 'reading buddy', there is often an idea exchange and of course asking each other what page we are on. If someone starts to get confused and our reading buddy has completed the reading, we will share with each other about what is bothering us, what is surprising, and what is not understood. This buddy read happens because there happens to be the same 'to-be-read' (TBR) and both have the desire to read it immediately." (P02, 9 June 2024).

Furthermore, P09 added that making decisions in virtual communication through 'reading buddy' activities are based on a sense of ownership, similarity in reading books, and similarity in sharing recommendations for books to be read.

A successful online community is a self-organizing, interactive network of interactions, formed based on shared interests and goals of its participants (Sharkov & Kirillina, 2022). Similarly, the bookstagram community, although it has no written goals, this community can develop naturally and interactively, moving itself to achieve the goals of reading activities.

Compatibility of 'reading buddy' backgrounds
The decision to do this reading activity together, in addition to reading the same books, was also due to the compatibility of the backgrounds of the 'reading buddy' partners. This was stated in one of P07's statements, which stated that he and his reading buddy partner were friends and shared everything about books because of his background as a tutor and his reading buddy partner as a teacher, "Our conversations on Instagram Direct Message became close and relatable, it turns out we didn't just talk about books."

Similar to P07's experience, in addition to the similarity of reading book interests, P04 also has the experience of communicating virtually with a reading buddy partner because of the similarity of educational background. This makes communication more comfortable and the similar background makes memory stronger. Thus, this is one of the considerations when communicating with strangers on Instagram.

Instagram facilitates online friendships by increasing positive perceptions of friendship (Juliano Suwandi & Puji Astuti, 2023). With features for sharing photo and video content, messaging features and video call services, Instagram has become a facilitation of communication for bookstagrammers intensively, increasing friendship among individuals with the same hobby.

Expectation
It is undeniable that when we meet someone in the real world, we place hopes or expectations on that person. This was also experienced by P01, who stated that it was exciting to join the

bookstagram community on Instagram, so that when someone invited him to do a 'reading buddy' activity, he felt like 'I belong to this community'. He said, "My reading buddy partner provides critical and amazing reviews and opinions of the books that we read, so there is an expectation that he will be a fun and beneficial discussion partner for me".

Within the scope of the 'reading buddy' activity with the community, P05 pursued a virtual book discussion with many other bookstagrams. "We don't know when you can exchange ideas and get new views about books if not now. Sometimes, if you read a book that is not exciting, by doing this 'reading buddy' activity, it becomes at least an influence to motivate us to read the book until the end".

Social expectations and hopes to allow a person to reciprocate by observing the actions of others and trusting those people to reciprocate their behaviour (Bogdan et al., 2023). This also applies to reading activities together with a reading buddy, that the virtual interaction that occurs becomes something that is expected, whether it is fun, comfortable, can share without feeling awkward, until the reading buddy is able to motivate the habit of reading.

Emotional intimacy, habits, and relationship maintenance in virtual communication with reading buddy partners among millennials and Z bookstagrammers

Meeting strangers online provides many opportunities in the future. Suitable or not, trusting or not, beneficial or not, everything might influence whether a virtual communication relationship developed with a 'reading buddy' partner on Instagram will continue or not, after the book being read together is completed. This activity elicits an emotional intimacy reaction which serves as one of virtual communication relationships to build. Moreover, the pattern of virtual communication habits of 'reading buddy' activity partners on Instagram also becomes a component of the decision-making process for the continuation of virtual communication with 'reading buddy' partners among bookstagrammers.

Emotional intimacy with reading buddy partner
Self and social connections on social media encourage individuals to share information through self-efficacy and increased empathy (Kim et al., 2023). Like other social media platforms, WeChat positively impacts strengthening and maintaining friendships (Wan, 2023). In 'reading buddy' activities with online friends, several types of emotional closeness emerge in several forms, including opinions validation while reading books, the opportunity to talk about private things other than books, and grasp each other's feelings.

Opinions validation in reading books
When communicating with someone who shares the same reading interests, one or both parties share their thoughts and hope for getting validation for their opinions or criticisms of the books they are reading. According to P01's statement, he stated that he likes the 'reading buddy' activity because he feels satisfied with every discussion and sharing moments with his reading buddy. He said, "Fortunately, my reading buddy has the same frequency as me in terms of conversation, I feel that my views on the books we read are well validated. That's what makes me keep interacting with him until now."

The use of social media increases empathy, with significant differences between self-evaluations and others' assessments (Chai, 2023). When someone has an opinion, validation from those closest to them often makes them more confident in expressing their opinions. In reading buddy activities, opinions and criticisms of reading books become virtual conversation topics, making validation based on empathy for criticism related to reading books become the foundation of a person's self-confidence.

Opportunity to talk about private things other than books
The comfort built during virtual communication with reading buddies, raises other topics outside book conversations. P03 stated that, besides discussing books they read together in virtual communication, he and his reading buddies also 'confide' about family issues. "We talk about family problems, and this makes us emotionally close."

People share personal thoughts on social media for social reasons, influenced by extraversion, openness, and media use, while lonely and low-esteem individuals do so for therapeutic reasons (Stone et al., 2022). Thus, the presence of supportive friends can increase

mental health literacy and encourage help-seeking situations among adolescents (Manchanda et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, social norms encourage positive and independent self-disclosure on social media (Masur et al., 2023). Furthermore, research shows that social media provides a platform to connect with friends and family, which influences how people deal with issues and their resilience (Potdar et al., 2022).

Grasp each other's feelings
The continuity of virtual communication with reading buddies is also caused by the ease of grasping each other's feelings, which is closely related to the emotional intimacy that happens during the reading session. P08 stated that while he was discussing Instagram Direct Message with his 'reading buddy' partner, they related to each other's feelings in the book. Similar to the statement of P09 which assumed that reading a book together and having the same opinion (about the books), made our feelings connected. P05 explained further through the following statement:

> "We often communicate via Direct Message and even meet in person with friends who initially only met online on Instagram. In addition to having the same reading interests, I feel that we can more easily understand each other's feelings. Conversations also tend to flow and are not awkward even though we live in different places. Some are outside the island or even on different continents." (P05, 6 June 2024).

Trust strengthens the relationship between social media engagement and social relationships, playing a significant role in shaping those relationships (Hatamleh et al., 2023). In addition, online social networks (OSNs) can strengthen friendships relationship that already exist and explore the same interests together (B. Yu & Leung, 2023). In reading buddy activities, it is based on trust so that reading buddies can explore their interest in reading the same books together. However, there was also an informant who did not get emotional intimacy with his 'reading buddy' partner, even though they had gone through virtual reading activities together and shared intensely their reading experiences. One of the reasons was stated by P05 through the following statement:

> "Perhaps, because I am quite a practical person and consider buddy reading as a useful activity in the bookstagram world. Personally, I also find it quite difficult to get emotionally close to others without empathy. And I am pretty sure other bookstagrammers are the same, at least not experiencing emotional intimacy with every reading buddy they meet" (P05, 14 June 2024).

From the categorisation presented, that reading buddy activity on Instagram, that emotional intimacy in establishing reading buddy activity is one of the main foundations in the virtual communication sustainability of reading buddy activity. However, there is an exception that certain bookstagram circles do not feel emotionally intimate because they consider that this activity is only beneficial for themselves. This group considers reading buddy activity as just a way to fill their spare time, as well as communicating with friends in the same community is just part of the self-development activity in the bookstagram community. This means that the virtual communication sustainability is also determined by a person's character in the real world.

Virtual Communication Habits with a 'reading buddy' Partner
From the activity of reading with virtual reading buddies through Instagram, bookstagrammers get certain habits in communicating, including the habit of communicating virtually almost daily and the habit of discussing through virtual book clubs. This habit also contributes to the virtual communication sustainability with 'reading buddy' partners in the future, after finishing reading a book together.

Virtual communication almost daily
Millennials and the Z Generation are close to the internet. For 'reading buddy' activities, they need to go online every day, communicate with online friends almost all the time, and follow the consumption patterns of friends with the same hobby when accessing social media.

P01 and P02, for example. They stated that they communicate intensively almost every day through direct message (DM) on Instagram. Not only greeting each other and discussing books, they also reply to each other's Instagram Stories, give each other feedback comments on bookstagram friends' Instagram posts, and tag each other's posts with bookstagram friends. P02 feels that discussing books that have been read can be a lengthy discussion topic.

P03 stated that this virtual chat often goes to the personal life topic, so it was often interspersed with sharing each other's feelings and activities. This became the flavour of virtual communication among unique bookstagrammers. P05 stated that during this intense virtual communication, he and his 'reading buddy' partner discussed books, complained, and even planned a reading agenda together again in the future, "This kind of communication happens naturally, not just praising comments, 'wow, nice review!' or other shallow comments."

P07 prefers to discuss books chapter by chapter, so it will have a detailed discussion, although he cannot force his will on his 'reading buddy' friend. P08 prefers to update his reading progress through Instagram Story while tagging his 'reading buddy' partner, then discuss further via Instagram Direct Message.

P09 tends to be more assertive, usually he communicates through WhatsApp, agree to read a book in a month, "Then on the appointed date, we discuss and express our feelings (about the book we read). If it's on Instagram, we read the book then we finish it all and review it on Instagram post and there we tell each other stories". P07 also added a principle that he applies to himself that, "At least in one day there must be a time to communicate, at least ask about each other's reading progress. That's the relationship between reading buddy partners; it needs to be maintained".

Daily interaction with friends increases emotional well-being (Ng et al., 2023). Other research also shows that intimate friendships have a significant positive relationship with self-disclosure in young adult Instagram users (Jati & Mardi Rahayu, 2023). This means that daily interaction with a reading buddy guarantees happiness and also gives them opportunities to open up.

Discuss through virtual book club after the 'reading buddy' activity is finished
In addition to communicating almost daily facilitated by Instagram features, virtual communication in the 'reading buddy' activity is also encouraged through virtual discussions held by book clubs that have a regular schedule agreed by the club leader to discuss together. P04 stated that he sometimes joins a book club held on Google Meet. He also admitted that his initial introduction to this virtual book club discussion was through the bookstagram community on Instagram.

Discussion through virtual book clubs is a habit that is formed due to changes in digital lifestyle offered by current technological developments nowadays. Books or literature become a facilitation to reflect creativity and thoughts that are discussed together in the online book community (Irina-Ana Drobot, 2023). The interactions that occur in virtual discussions in this book club stimulate the emergence of different thoughts from different perspectives, as well as the emergence of creativity in delivering the discussion.

Relationship maintenance
From all the virtual communication experiences of Millennials and Generation Z bookstagrammers in conducting 'reading Buddy' activities on Instagram, whether how they interpret the term of 'reading buddy', how they decide to connect with their 'reading buddy' partners, how they conduct the activity of reading books together virtually, until they form the emotional intimacy and a certain virtual communication habits, then various decisions can be taken by someone when the reading activity is finished. This assumes that the reading book they have read so far has been completed thus that there are no conversation topics between the 'reading buddy' partners anymore.

Continue virtual communication intensively
Interesting decision was expressed by 8 out of 10 informants, who stated that they would continue to communicate virtually intensively with their 'reading buddy' partners after the reading a book together activity had ended. P02 committed to continuing to greet their 'ex-reading buddy' partners on Instagram. P04 often exchanged messages outside of book topics,

even meeting in the real world to hang out together for fun. P07 continued to actively communicate virtually through Instagram to support each other in creating content about books, while P08 was very grateful for being willing to do the reading together activity virtually.

The informants who conduct reading buddy activities felt that there are a lot of benefits from this process, so they were interested in continuing to build friendships with their 'reading buddy' partners. This is also supported by research that has been conducted, one of them is 'Kindles4Covid Virtual Reading Buddies Program' which successfully increased the frequency of reading and building relationships with peers during the COVID-19 pandemic, thus being able to overcome the challenges of isolation (Pandey et al., 2022). In addition, studies show that friendship has humanising potential and can be used to achieve virtue (Espinosa Zárate et al., 2023).

Continue to communicate about book topics only
Not everyone in reading buddies wants to openly communicate virtually after the 'reading buddy' activity is over. P01 is committed to communicating virtually with bookstagram friends about books only, "I set boundaries not to talk about personal life with friends on Instagram, because basically we are still strangers".

Adolescents' privacy management on social media, influenced by a low need to coordinate boundaries with peers, is impacted by ethical considerations as Instagram blurs the lines between public and private spaces, thereby affecting their interactions (De Wolf, 2020). Digital communication ethics are important for controlling emotions and respecting privacy, allowing interactions without physical boundaries (Batoebara & Lubis, 2022).

In between to continue or not continue to communicate
Two informants were still confused in determining the virtual communication relationship continuation after the reading session with online friends was finish. P05 tried to maintain it, but he would not force a virtual relationship with his former "reading buddy" partner. "I wouldn't feel sad if he/she thought I was an ordinary person. If their response is not as excited as before, I will step back."

Similar to P05, P06 felt that a continued virtual relationship requires commitment and effort from both parties, just like any kind of other relationship.

> "If the "reading buddy" activity is over, I still try to maintain and support them with what I can do. But if they don't do anything, I usually stop too. I'm aware that most bookstagrammers are introverts, and so do I. So, I don't want to force this relationship with them." (P05, 13 June 2024).

Maintenance and support in interpersonal communication are called Relational Maintenance stages. Relational Maintenance is divided into four stages (Liliweri, 2015), which is the integration stage, bonding stage, differentiation stage, and circumscribing stage. The *integration* stage is the stage when two parties begin to commit to continue interacting. The second stage is *bonding*, the two parties determining the boundaries of the relationship according to the commitment requirements. The next stage is *differentiation*, where the two parties reflect the differences again in order to continue the interaction. Until the last stage is *circumscribing*, when both parties can get to know each other better, so that they understand the boundaries in communication between the two parties.

Social media can strengthen interpersonal relationships, but it also increases loneliness and anxiety due to the lack of face-to-face communication (S. Yu, 2023). The decision to continue virtual communication with friends with the same hobby in a virtual community is also supported by an understanding of privacy in cyberspace. Privacy literacy in social media reflects the inherent gap in the use of technology (S. Choi, 2023).

How networked individualism theory describes virtual communication in forming friends based on similar interests
According to Barry Wellman (Hogan, 2009), Networked Individualism Theory shows a social shift from group-focused interactions to interactions that occur more between individuals. He stated that this shift is related to the increased use of media between individuals and the adjustment of the use of media individually. This means that there is a shift from closely-knit communities as

the basis for communication to individuals who network (Eklund & Sadowski, 2023), just as the bookstagrammer community on Instagram is a relationship between individuals and small groups in carrying out reading activities together facilitated by digital platforms.

We build and maintain relationships according to our needs and interests, and by that, we understand the world through the interactions we choose (Overstreet, 2020). The bookstagram community is quite a large community, considering that reading is a universal hobby. The presence of this community opens up great opportunities for users to switch to using Instagram in communication between individuals in reading buddy activities, seeking the benefits of personal reading activities with strangers on Instagram. Moreover, bookstagrammers on Instagram network also build virtual reading clubs with much smaller and comfortable circles for them.

Network individualism describes a situation in which individuals become managers of their own personal networks (Chua & Wellman, 2016). Research conducted by Wellman et al. (2020) stated that young adults are the most likely to be networked individuals. This means that Gen Z bookstagrammers are the most likely to do it. However, millennial bookstagrammers also conduct it. By the theory, bookstagrammers in conducting reading buddy activities completely rely on personal networks to fulfil their personal needs for their interest in reading books, thus reducing communal ties with the virtual bookstagram community in general.

Instagram, for the younger generation, showcases various aspects of themselves in cyberspace and shows how technical features influence online social behavior (Yenilmez Kacar, 2024). Connectivity in online communities influences individual knowledge contribution and growth more than communality, with important roles being played by transmission speed, parallelism, symbol sequences, and media reprocessing capabilities (Liao et al., 2024). Millennials and Gen-Z choose social media based on fit with goals and social norms before considering affordability and features (Taber et al., 2023).

Reading is one of the basic skills of human literacy. Reading culture can be developed through cooperation between families, schools, and libraries to form a critical and tolerant reading culture as well as support intelligence in facing life's problems (Khakimova & Nosirov, 2023; Saepurokhman et al., 2023).

Social media platforms have played a role in creating new interpersonal relationships, which have influenced the society and communities' structures (Baouch, 2023). In the conventional reading culture and the presence of reading communities on the Instagram platform, this combination forms unique interpersonal relationships in the virtual bookstagrammer community, through reading activities together and sharing with friends who have the same reading tastes. This is what we call a 'reading buddy'.

In addition, reading buddy activities can be a facility for young readers to connect and increase their literacy productivity through reading activities. Generation Z's reading behaviour is influenced by their MBTI type, which influences motivation, genre choices, and book purchases (Lee & Sung, 2023). From these factors, activities with reading buddies can be a facility of improving self-skills. For example, based on research, the reading buddy program has succeeded in improving the communication skills of postgraduate students, and improving the quality of Veterans life with acute dementia through individual care (A. Trudeau & E. Gately, 2021).

Overall, this study explores in depth how virtual communication in a large social community (bookstagram) shifts to an interpersonal approach in the 'reading buddy' activity. This answers the phenomenon that occurs in the subculture on Instagram, where the social media platform has succeeded in forming social, cultural practices that broadly impact users.

CONCLUSION

Starting from the reading books online activity with friends, this has become a cultural practice in the virtual community. The name of 'reading buddy' becomes familiar, which can be generally interpreted as a reading friend, a sharing friend, and an activity of mingling with community friends. Someone who loves to read meets a stranger who also loves to read on Instagram, forming a 'reading buddy' activity experience, which is at least based on the motivation of the same taste in books, a matching background, and the expectation of a reciprocity relationship.

This study also explores the experiences of millennial and Z generation bookstagrammers in terms of emotional intimacy between reading buddies consisting of

reading opinions validations, private matters talk opportunities, and making it easier to understand each other's feelings; virtual communication habits with reading buddy partners that are established include communicating virtually almost daily and discussing through virtual book clubs; as well as maintaining relationships after the 'reading buddy' activity is finish by continuing to conduct a virtual communication intensively, continue to communicate about books topic only, and in between continuing and not continuing communication.

This study shows changes in meaning, motivation, and readers' experience caused by the existence of the bookstagram community on Instagram. Reading buddies are interpreted as relationships with the same interest in reading and network preferences to improve their communication and literacy skills. This article highlights the importance of the role of social media Instagram in forming interpersonal connectedness among people with similar interests. This motivation forms interpersonal relationships that have a positive impact on personal development and individual knowledge, especially among the younger generation in terms of reading books. For further research in the future, it is recommended to dive into the sustainability of virtual communication, which can be studied through a symbolic interaction approach.

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