

BETWEEN SCREEN AND CITY: EXPERIENCES OF URBAN STRESS AND DIGITAL WELL-BEING OF BANDUNG'S YOUNG GENERATION

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Abstrak

Media sosial telah mengubah cara generasi muda memaknai kehidupan perkotaan. Kota tidak lagi hanya dialami melalui interaksi langsung dengan ruang fisik, tetapi juga melalui paparan informasi digital yang berlangsung secara berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi pengalaman stres urban, dinamika emosional, kesejahteraan digital, dan makna keterlibatan dalam komunitas kota berkelanjutan pada generasi muda Bandung. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan analisis fenomenologi interpretatif dengan melibatkan delapan generasi Milenial dan Z yang berdomisili di Bandung. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik, dengan tahapan pembacaan berulang transkrip, pencatatan makna-makna kunci, pengembangan tema pengalaman, serta interpretasi terhadap pengalaman partisipan terkait stress urban dan kesejahteraan digital. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa paparan konten mengenai kemacetan, kriminalitas, dan persoalan lingkungan memunculkan kecemasan, frustrasi, kelelahan mental, serta rasa tidak berdaya. Namun, media sosial juga menumbuhkan kepedulian, rasa memiliki, dan harapan terhadap kota. Untuk menjaga kesejahteraan digital, partisipan menerapkan strategi coping berupa pembatasan paparan informasi, kurasi konten, dan keterlibatan selektif. Keterlibatan dalam kota berkelanjutan dimaknai sebagai wujud kepedulian dan identitas kewargaan melalui partisipasi sehari-hari. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa media sosial membentuk hubungan emosional warga dengan kota serta berperan dalam upaya mewujudkan kota yang lebih berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Stres Urban, Kesejahteraan Digital, Media Sosial, Generasi Muda, Kota dan Komunitas Berkelanjutan

Abstract

Social media has transformed how the younger generation perceives urban life. The city is no longer experienced solely through direct interaction with physical spaces but also through continuous exposure to digital information. This study aims to explore the experiences of urban stress, emotional dynamics, digital well-being, and the meaning of engagement in sustainable urban communities among Bandung's youth. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach was employed, involving eight individuals from Generations Y (Millennials) and Z residing in Bandung. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis, involving repeated transcript reading, the identification of key meanings, the development of experiential themes, and the interpretation of participants' experiences regarding urban stress and digital well-being. The findings reveal that exposure to content concerning traffic congestion, crime, and environmental issues triggers anxiety, frustration, mental fatigue, and a sense of powerlessness. However, social media also fosters care, a sense of belonging, and hope regarding the city. To maintain digital well-being, participants employ coping strategies such as limiting information exposure, curating content, and engaging selectively. Engagement with the sustainable city is interpreted as an expression of care and civic identity through everyday participation. These findings demonstrate that social media shapes residents' emotional connections to the city and plays a role in efforts to realize a more sustainable urban environment.

Keywords: Urban Stress, Digital Wellbeing, Social Media, Youth, Sustainable Cities and Communities

1. INTRODUCTION

Bandung City faces various urban challenges, such as increasing waste due to population growth, homelessness and begging, and spatial and environmental issues (Ekawati et al., 2024; Paliama, 2024; Rochman et al., 2024). Furthermore, access to green space, transportation options, and housing quality

significantly impact the quality of life of Bandung residents (Setiawan & Ningtyas, 2023).

Social media has become a lifestyle that has become integrated into the daily lives of city dwellers, particularly Generation Z and Millennials. Social media is transforming how cities are experienced by residents (Naja et al.,

2024). Furthermore, social media also reflects and reshapes the image of urban spaces through visual platforms like Instagram (Acar & İpek Ek, 2024). The presence of digital spaces is increasingly crucial for social interaction and understanding of cities (Gutsche, 2021). Studies show that communication through social media actively shapes urban spaces, influencing identity, social integration, and public discourse, going beyond simply reflecting urban processes (Shkurov, 2025). Social media can also strengthen, transform, or obscure local cultural values through digital negotiation (Rusli et al., 2025).

From a mediated urban experience perspective (Törnberg, 2025), social media content about Bandung highlighting traffic jams, trash, government policies, and citizen complaints shape a digitally mediated experience of the city. Repeated exposure to urban issues on Instagram, TikTok, and X makes the urban experience feel more intense, emotional, and collective through screens, so that citizens experience the city not only physically but also symbolically in the digital communication space.

With diverse urban issues mediated by increasingly widespread and repetitive social media content, urban stress is likely to arise. Urban stress is traditionally defined by components such as population density, information overload, noise effects, and driving stress (Ostfeld & D'Atri, 1975). Urban stress resulting from social media exposure is linked to resilience, which encompasses the ability to cope with stressful events reported on social media (Leykin et al., 2018). Higher levels of urban social stress are associated with lower mental and physical quality (Willie et al., 2016). Studies indicate that excessive digital exposure is a significant stressor in urban environments, second only to academic pressure, influencing mental and emotional disorders in adolescents (Yildiz et al., 2025).

Facing the diverse pressures of urbanization on social media, young people often find themselves in a tension between the need to stay informed about public issues and the need to maintain psychological well-being. The concept of digital well-being refers to an important outcome of modern life and refers to the balanced and conscious use of digital

technologies to improve an individual's overall quality of life (Tayiz et al., 2025).

The younger generation, especially Generation Z and millennials, are the main subjects in the digital urban experience because they have grown up as active users of social media who live at the intersection between digital space and urban reality. The younger generation focuses more attention on urban social and economic issues rather than aesthetic issues, feeling civic loneliness despite being digitally connected (Gerodimos, 2018). Social media also empowers youth by providing a platform to raise awareness and address urban problems such as public crises (Pandey & Singh, 2018).

On the other hand, the intensity of media exposure also makes them vulnerable to emotional stress such as stress, anxiety, and depression (Tria Adelia & Icha Delia, 2025), information fatigue and digital anxiety. However, the younger generation is not only an affected group, but also shows adaptive abilities, independence, and digital resilience by developing self-regulation strategies such as managing screen time and implementing security measures (Santana et al., 2026).

Research on urban experiences and digital well-being shows that urban spaces are now not only experienced physically but also mediated through social media by the younger generation. Previous studies on urban well-being confirmed that the urban environment and social networks influence the quality of life of urban residents (Setiawan & Ningtyas, 2023), while other research suggests that city-related Instagram use shapes a digital sense of place and community (Gatti & Procentese, 2021). Studies on digital well-being also highlight the importance of emotional balance in media use in the digital age (Santana et al., 2026). However, previous research has been limited in examining how young people in Indonesia interpret digital well-being because of exposure to urban content on social media, particularly in Greater Bandung. The dominance of quantitative approaches has also resulted in a lack of exploration of the personal meanings and emotional dynamics of young people. This study focuses on exploring the subjective experiences of young people in negotiating the need to stay informed while maintaining digital

well-being amidst the intense flow of urban information.

This research aims to explore experiences of urban stress resulting from exposure to urban content on social media, the emotional dynamics of digital everyday life, negotiations about digital well-being, and the meaning of involvement in sustainable city communities. This research uses a phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of young people related to urban stress and digital well-being resulting from exposure to urban content on social media. This approach is relevant because it focuses on subjective meanings and personal experiences that cannot be reduced to mere numbers. Bandung was chosen as the research context because it is a creative city with a high intensity of urban issues, while social media serves as a space for citizen discourse on various city issues.

Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the study of digital communication, mediated urban experience, digital well-being, and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by presenting a phenomenological perspective on young people's experiences of coping with urban stress on social media. Practically, this research is expected to provide input for governments, communities, and digital media managers in creating healthier, more supportive, and more sustainable communication spaces for the digital well-being of urban communities.

2. METHODS

This research uses qualitative methods with an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach (Smith & Osborn, 2015) to understand the lived experiences of the young generation of city residents in dealing with urban stress and negotiating digital well-being through exposure to social media. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the subjective meaning of individual experiences, especially how they feel, realize and interpret the presence of the city through digital screens in everyday life.

The participants in this study were 8 young people from Generation Z and Millennials (age 21-40 years old) living in the Bandung area. The participants were selected purposively, considering certain criteria: individuals who

actively use social media, particularly Instagram, and have experience with content related to life in Bandung. The number of participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, which occurs when interviews no longer yield significant new information or themes.

Table 1. Research Informant Data

Code	Initials	Age	Generation (Y/Z)	Domicile	Occupation
P01	SR	31	Y	Bandung City	Housewife
P02	YM	30	Y	Bandung City	Entrepreneur
P03	RSM	31	Y	West Bandung Regency	Private Employee
P04	SR	40	Y	Bandung Regency	Private Employee
P05	LAH	21	Z	Bandung City	Student
P06	NIM	23	Z	Bandung City	Student
P07	KQ	24	Z	Cimahi City	Freelance
P08	NA	22	Z	Bandung City	Student
P01	SR	31	Y	Bandung City	Housewife
P02	YM	30	Y	Bandung City	Entrepreneur

(Source: Author, 2026)

Research data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews over a three-month period (April–June 2026). This technique was used to provide space for participants to share their experiences reflectively and narratively, while also allowing researchers to explore aspects relevant to the research focus (Creswell & Creswell, 2023), such as emotional experiences, social media practices, and individual strategies for maintaining digital well-being. All interviews were conducted with participants' consent and recorded for transcription and further analysis.

Data analysis followed the phenomenological stages (Smith & Osborn, 2004) which focus on deeply interpreting participants' lived experiences. Analysis was conducted through repeated readings of interview transcripts, noting key meanings, developing experiential themes, and interpreting how participants interpreted their experiences of urban stress and digital well-

being. This process enabled researchers to understand the subjective experiences of young people more reflectively and contextually.

To maintain data validity, this study employed trustworthiness techniques, including credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is achieved through member checking, which involves reconfirming interview results or interpretations with participants. Dependability is maintained by systematically documenting the research process, while confirmability is achieved by maintaining objectivity through researcher reflection during the analysis process.

This results and discussion section presents findings regarding the experiences of Bandung's young generation in dealing with urban stress and the dynamics of digital well-being resulting from exposure to urban content on social media. The findings are analyzed using an interpretive phenomenological approach to understand how participants interpret their daily experiences, from their emotional responses to urban issues, to their strategies for negotiating digital well-being, to their engagement in discourses and urban communities in digital spaces. The findings can be seen in Figure 1.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

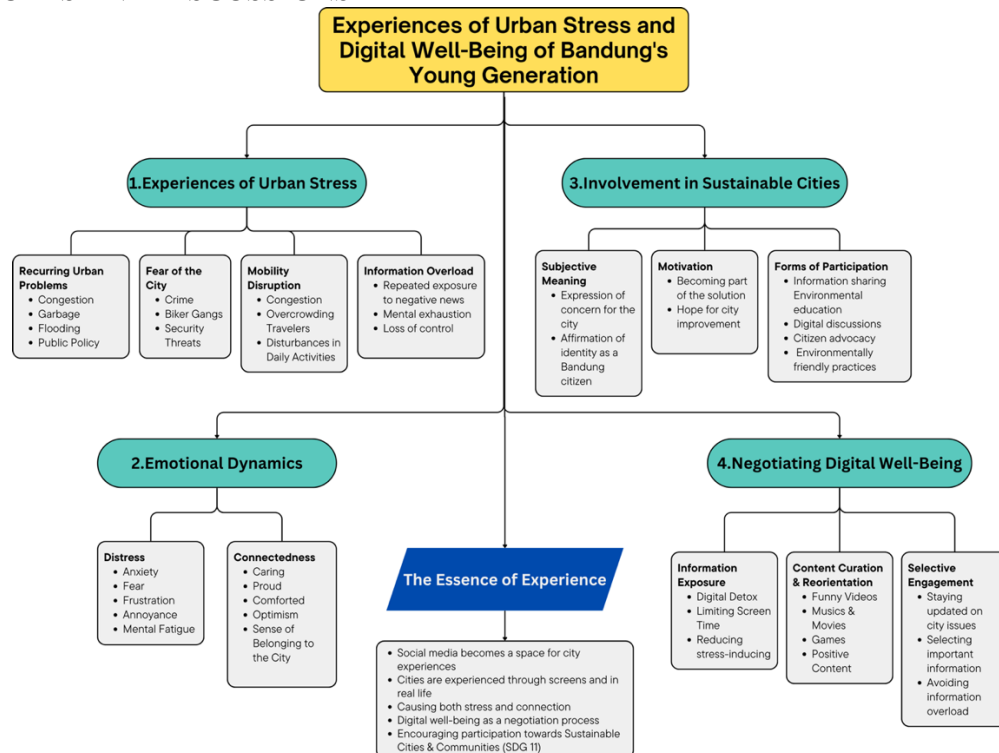


Figure 1. Construction of Meaning: Experiences of Urban Stress and Digital Well-being of Young People in Greater Bandung
 (Source: Author, 2026)

Based on the meaning construction model in Figure 1, the experiences of urban stress and digital well-being of young people in Bandung City are interconnected processes involving exposure to urban issues, emotional dynamics, involvement in realizing a sustainable city, and strategies for maintaining digital well-being. The following section presents the research

findings and discussion to answer the research questions.

Urban Stress Experiences Due to Exposure to Urban Content on Social Media

This section describes the experiences of urban stress among Bandung's young generation, including repeated exposure to urban problems, fear of the city as constructed by social media, anticipation of mobility disruptions, and exposure to negative news that

triggers mental fatigue. These four aspects demonstrate how urban realities and the flow of digital information collectively shape the informants' experiences of stress.

Repeated Exposure to Urban Problems Creates Collective Mental Fatigue

Most informants described urban stress not as a single event, but as an experience that arises from repeated exposure to city problems that constantly appear on social media. Information about waste, traffic jams, flooding, crime, and poor public facilities appears constantly, fostering the perception that the city's problems are never resolved. This profound exhaustion is manifested in the city's crisis of solutions and inability (P01, P06, P08) and the daily pressures and perceptions of stagnation (P03, P04).

For participants, urban stress stems not only from the presence of urban problems but also from repeated exposure to the same issues through social media. This condition aligns with findings that urban adolescents are more susceptible to mental health problems than non-urban adolescents (Borg et al., 2023). Furthermore, repeated information creates feelings of social stagnation and a belief that cities are not improving, while constant exposure can trigger message fatigue, which reduces engagement and support for an issue (Lu, 2022). Consequently, social media becomes a space that repeatedly reminds individuals of unresolved urban issues, leading to cumulative psychological exhaustion.

Fear of the City Constructed Through Social Media

The second theme emerged strongly among informants who were frequently exposed to crime news. The psychological impact in public spaces was experienced as a result of feelings of insecurity, fear of leaving the house, and discomfort in public areas (P05). P02 experienced anxiety and behavioral changes that triggered anger and anxiety, leading to constant planning of safer travel routes. Meanwhile, perceptions of the residential environment (P07) led to the perception that the city was increasingly crowded and unlivable.

In the informants' experiences, social media served not only as a means of conveying information but also as a source of fear, as

threats not yet directly experienced felt imminent through constant exposure to information. This situation suggests that urban stress stems not only from physical experiences in the city but also from symbolic experiences shaped by the flow of digital information. Social media shapes how people view cities and various urban issues, thus triggering feelings of worry, fear, and anxiety about their living environment (Törnberg, 2025). As a result, cities are perceived as spaces full of potential threats, while social media also reinforces fear and negative perceptions through digital spaces that are rich in emotional meaning (Gutsche, 2021).

Anticipating Urban Mobility Disruptions

Congestion emerged as a dominant theme experienced across generations. P02, P04, and P08 described that even before entering city streets, they already felt depressed after seeing information about traffic jams via social media. P08 specifically explained that news of traffic jams made him immediately imagine longer journeys, delays, and energy wasted on the road. Information received via social media becomes a source of stress even before traffic jams are experienced.

P03 also stated that awareness of poor city planning often emerged when he was on the way to work, especially after previously seeing various information regarding traffic jams, waste, and city conditions on social media. As said by P03 below.

"My awareness of various urban problems usually arises when I'm commuting to work and during my commute. I experience firsthand the various sights that reflect the city's lack of order, which creates psychological stress for me because I have to deal with them every day. The most dominant forms of stress are related to waste and traffic jams. Both of these issues impact my emotional state, such as decreasing enthusiasm and motivation for carrying out daily activities." (P03, 2026)

These findings suggest that social media extends the experience of traffic congestion

from the physical to the mental realm, so that congestion is not only experienced while on the road but also presents as an emotional anticipation before the journey begins. Digital platforms allow individuals to imagine mobility constraints through threats, speculation, and circulating information, thus shaping the anticipatory experience of traffic congestion (Koivunen et al., 2024). This is consistent with findings that individuals can feel anxious or stressed even before leaving the house during rush hour, suggesting that traffic congestion is a mental anticipation, not simply an ongoing event (Bahall et al., 2026). Furthermore, social media posts about traffic conditions not only depict the physical situation but also represent people's perceptions and sentiments about traffic congestion as emotional experiences shared online (Chang et al., 2022; Ma et al., 2021). Thus, urban stress emerges as an anticipatory experience that drains energy even before the activity begins.

City Information Overload and the Feeling of Losing Control

Several informants described the overwhelming amount of negative information about the city as overwhelming and difficult to manage. P01 mentioned that seeing negative news about Bandung made his mind feel overloaded. P07 explained that the stress of the city stems not only from the city's problems themselves, but also from the constant flow of information on social media.

P02 felt that the daily news updates created the impression that conditions in Bandung were getting worse over time. P06 displayed a different response. He felt less stressed because he tried to maintain emotional distance from information he perceived as beyond his control. However, he still acknowledged the fatigue of repeatedly seeing the same news without resolution.

At the deepest level of experience, urban stress arises from the tension between awareness and helplessness. Social media makes citizens increasingly aware of various city problems, but this knowledge is not always accompanied by the ability to change the situation, giving rise to feelings of loss of control related to stress, anxiety and unhappiness (Xue et al., 2023). This condition

is the main source of psychological fatigue experienced by informants.

From the experiences of P01–P08, the essence of urban stress can be understood as psychological exhaustion resulting from repeated exposure to representations of urban problems on social media that create feelings of insecurity, impaired mobility, and helplessness regarding urban problems that are perceived as recurring and difficult to resolve. Social media is not only an information channel, but also an experiential space where citizens experience the city emotionally. Social media platforms become the primary space for expressing opinions, emotions, experiences, and urban identities (Grazuleviciute-Vileniske et al., 2025), so that various problems such as traffic jams, garbage, and crime are present as daily experiences that shape the perceptions, emotions, and psychological well-being of the younger generation.

Emotional Dynamics in Digital Everyday Life

In contrast to the experiences above which focus on experiences of urban stress, this section reveals how exposure to city information on social media gives rise to a complex and dynamic spectrum of emotions. Analysis shows that the emotions experienced by participants are not single but move between negative and positive poles simultaneously. From the data, two major themes were found that describe these emotional dynamics.

Distress Emotions: Anxiety, Fatigue, Anger, and Helplessness in Facing the City

The first theme shows that daily digital experiences are dominated by negative emotions that arise when participants encounter content about urban issues. Continuous exposure to negative content about urban conditions has a real impact on participants, including: emotional and mental disorders (P01, P03, P05, P07, P08) such as anxiety, fatigue, irritation, boredom, and prolonged frustration; changes in real-world behavior (P02), such as feeling afraid to travel alone or pass through deserted places at night due to crime news; and anxiety about daily mobility (P04) caused by news of demonstrations, traffic jams, or floods.

These emotions give rise to relatively similar emotional patterns, as shown in Figure 2.

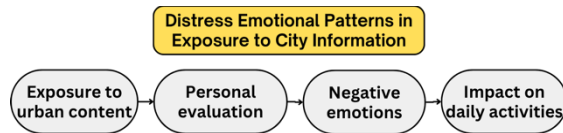


Figure 2. Distress Emotion Pattern
 (Source: Author, 2026)

The informants' emotional experience patterns indicate that exposure to urban content on social media is first interpreted based on its impact on daily life before eliciting emotional responses such as anxiety, annoyance, fatigue, frustration, and disappointment. The emotional experiences of urban youth are shaped through a process of information exposure, personal interpretation, and emotional responses that influence their psychological state and behavior. Negative emotions arise because urban information is perceived as close to their lives, so that urban space is not only experienced physically but also emotionally through what can be called "embodied urban emotion."

Emotions of Connectedness: Caring, Pride, Comfort, and Hope for the City

Despite the predominance of negative emotions, participants also demonstrated the emergence of positive emotions that strengthened their connection to the city. P01 admitted that information about city issues made him feel more concerned about the environment and maintaining city cleanliness. P04 felt an emotional connection to the city when following Bandung's community issues and activities through social media.

P05 expressed pride in seeing the city's positive developments and felt a growing sense of belonging to Bandung, as he saw so many people love it. P07 also revealed that social media made him feel closer to the lives of

Bandung residents, fostering a sense of belonging. P08 even used social media to disseminate information and encourage friends to adopt more environmentally friendly practices. Based on these results, a pattern of experience emerges that forms the pattern shown in Figure 3.

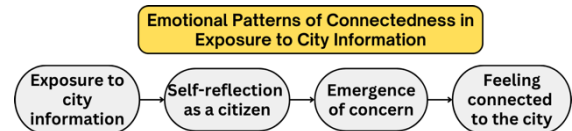


Figure 3. Emotional Patterns of Connectedness
 (Source: Author, 2026)

The patterns above show that city information does not always generate stress. In many cases, the same information fosters a sense of belonging, collective awareness, solidarity, and hope for the city's future. Social media is not only a source of emotional stress but also a space for the formation of digital citizenship identities. Furthermore, individuals use digital media to create emotional attachments to places and construct more "meaningful and connected" spaces (Halegoua & Polson, 2021).

Participants experienced the city not just as a place to live, but as a part of themselves. When they saw city problems, they felt disturbed due to their emotional attachment to the city. Conversely, when they saw improvements or citizen participation, they felt pride and hope. Participatory photo apps, such as Instagram, allow citizens to share and respond to city images, thus forming shared narratives and experiences about urban life (Madsen et al., 2023).

The analysis indicates that the informants' emotions are shaped by two primary sources of experience, as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Sources of Experience, Forms of Exposure to Urban Content, and Dominant Emotions

Experience Sources	Types of City Content Emerging on Social Media	Dominant Emotions
Exposure to urban risks and issues	- Crime, muggings, extortion, motorcycle gangs, kidnapping, potential disasters (Lembang Fault) - Congestion, flooding, traffic congestion, long weekends, city events - Trash, city cleanliness, pollution, waste management - Constantly emerging news about city issues, negative comments, citizen complaints	Anxious, scared, angry, tired, wary, bored, overwhelmed, worried, pessimistic, uncomfortable, frustrated

	- Citizen debates, negative comments, hoaxes, conflicts on social media - Issues of city density, security, public policy, city development	
Exposure to urban connectivity and improvement	- Community activities, cleanup drives, environmental volunteers, citizen events - City events, culinary delights, public spaces, community activities, city achievements	Hopeful, proud, concerned, optimistic, entertained

(Source: Author, 2026)

The emotions of Bandung's younger generation toward urban content are not only influenced by the information they receive, but also by the meaning they attach to its impact on their daily lives. These findings suggest that social media presents an ambivalent emotional experience. Emotions about the city circulate both geographically and online; social media maps urban joys, prides, fears, and frustrations and reshapes how citizens relate to their environment (Rosero Ordoñez, 2025).

Negotiating the Digital Well-being of Young Urban Residents

Phenomenological analysis shows that informants do not perceive digital well-being as a state of freedom from negative information, but rather as an ongoing negotiation between the need to stay connected to city information and the need to maintain emotional balance. In this process, informants develop various coping strategies to manage the stress that arises from exposure to urban content on social media.

Information Exposure Regulation

The most dominant strategy is to limit exposure to information when signs of emotional exhaustion begin to appear. Informants regulate information exposure by limiting the use of social media (P07, P08), reducing access to content that triggers stress (P07), and diverting attention to other activities to maintain emotional balance and protect their digital well-being (P03, P04). Meanwhile P05 chose to limit and divert attention from social media. As stated below.

"When I feel stressed due to exposure to information, I usually limit my use of social media for a while and divert my attention to other, more positive activities. This strategy helps me reduce my involvement in negative thoughts,

calm myself, and maintain mental health. In my experience, limiting the use of social media is quite effective in helping manage stress and improve mood." (P05, 2026)

For informants, digital well-being begins with the ability to recognize one's own emotional limits. Limiting information exposure isn't seen as a sign of disregard for the city, but rather as an effort to maintain psychological well-being so that one can function optimally in daily life.

Content Curation and Reorientation

Apart from reducing the intensity of social media use, informants also actively changed the type of content they consumed. Informants try to consume entertainment and positive content (P08, P07, P04), play games (P03), and access various platform algorithms to get more "fresh" information (P05).

Digital well-being is not only achieved by reducing social media use, but also through managing the quality of digital experiences. They do not completely leave the digital space, but rather reorient media consumption from a source of stress to a source of emotional healing. In other words, what is negotiated is not just the duration of media use, but also the emotional atmosphere produced by the media.

Selective Engagement

The third theme indicates that informants did not choose to completely distance themselves from city issues. Instead, they developed more selective engagement patterns. Informants applied certain boundaries in absorbing information about the city, limiting depth and negative content (P08, P07) and focusing on the practical daily needs of seeking relevant and useful information for daily decision-making (P03, P04). As conveyed by P04 below.

"When I feel bored or stressed by negative information, I tend to choose to consume entertaining content and avoid unpleasant news, especially news related to the situation in Bandung. I usually distract myself by watching videos on TikTok or YouTube to keep my mind off the negative information. This strategy helps me reduce emotional exhaustion and maintain a more positive mood when using digital media." (P04, 2026)

This strategy demonstrates a negotiation between the need to be informed citizens and the need to maintain emotional stability. Informants avoid becoming apathetic to city issues, but they also avoid drowning in the constant flow of anxiety-inducing information. They thus establish a position as "sufficiently informed citizens," meaning they are aware of city issues without consuming all available information. Table 3 summarizes the practices of the younger generation in maintaining their digital well-being.

Table 3. Digital Well-Being Practices of Young Urban Residents

Types of Practices	Practices
Limiting information exposure	Reducing social media usage, digital detox, temporarily deactivating accounts
Content curation	Muting certain accounts, unfollowing sources that trigger stress, choosing trusted sources of information
Algorithmic switching	Switching platforms to access a wider variety of positive content
Restorative content consumption	Watching funny videos, entertainment, music, movies, and educational content
Activity switching	Playing games, working, and engaging in offline activities
Selective engagement	Following only important information and avoiding excessive exploration of negative issues
Emotional self-monitoring	Recognizing signs of boredom, anxiety, overwhelm, or digital fatigue before conditions worsen

(Source: Author, 2026)

From the informants' experiences, digital well-being is defined as the ability to manage the boundaries between connectedness and information exposure. Younger generations do not seek to distance themselves from city information, but rather negotiate ways to stay informed without losing emotional composure through strategies of limitation, curation, and selective engagement. This finding aligns with research showing that goal-setting, self-monitoring, and limiting screen time are effective strategies for building healthy digital habits (Hong et al., 2025; Tock et al., 2025). Digital well-being is a reflective practice that helps individuals continue to care about the city without being burdened by the flow of information on social media.

The Meaning of "Engagement" in Sustainable Urban Communities

Phenomenological analysis shows that engagement in sustainable city issues and communities does not always manifest itself in

formal participation or membership in a specific community. For informants, engagement often takes the form of simple daily practices, such as sharing information, changing personal behavior, or demonstrating concern for city issues through social media. From the participants' experiences, two main subjective meanings and several forms of participation by young digital citizens in the context of sustainable cities were identified.

"Engagement" as an Expression of Concern for the City One Lives in

For most informants, involvement in sustainable city issues was interpreted as a form of concern for the living space they occupied. Exposure to urban issues sparked positive motivation among participants to contribute to change in the city. This involvement was demonstrated through concrete actions and environmental education (P08), voicing opinions and digital advocacy (P03), and motivation to build the city (P04).

This involvement was not understood as formal political activity, but rather as an affective expression of concern. Informants felt that the city was not just a place to live, but a part of their lives. This finding is relevant to studies showing that the use of community-oriented social media can increase citizen engagement, a sense of ownership of the environment, and concern for local issues (Choi et al., 2021; Nah et al., 2022). Therefore, concern for the city translates into simple actions that are considered capable of contributing to social and environmental change.

“Engagement” as an Affirmation of Identity and Belonging to the City

Social media makes informants feel closer to the lives of city residents, fostering a sense of belonging. This engagement is characterized by social closeness and self-identity (P07), which involves observing the diverse experiences of other residents and

fostering a sense of belonging to the city, a sustained personal bond (P04) that fosters a sense of belonging, and a strengthened sense of belonging through information (P03). Engagement is defined to maintain a symbolic connection with the city. The more information received about the city, the stronger the feeling of belonging to city life. Engagement then becomes a form of affirmation of identity as citizens with a moral responsibility towards their social environment.

Analysis shows that informants' participation tends to take the form of everyday civic participation mediated by social media. Community-related practices on social media can transform residents' experiences of their city by enhancing their sense of community and attachment to the place (Gatti & Procentese, 2021). Table 4 summarizes the forms of youth participation in supporting sustainable urban communities.

Table 4. Forms of Digital Participation of the Young Generation towards Sustainable City Communities

Forms of Participation	Examples of Informant Experiences
Spread information	Sharing city news, sharing valid information with friends or on social media (P01, P04, P07)
Educate the surrounding environment	Reminding friends to bring a tumbler, reducing single-use plastic (P08)
Digital discussion and advocacy	Posting comments, opinions, or complaints regarding city issues on social media (P03, P07)
Increase self-awareness	Becoming more concerned about environmental issues, cleanliness, and city transportation (P01, P03, P08)
Symbolic participation	Following city conversations, monitoring public issues, showing support for citizen movements (P04, P07)
Information-based participation	Using social media information to make more adaptive decisions regarding city conditions (P04)

(Source: Author, 2026)

These results indicate that engagement in sustainable cities is understood to foster a relationship with the city they inhabit. Through social media, citizens not only obtain information about the city but also develop a sense of ownership, concern, and moral responsibility for its future. This engagement is manifested through simple actions in everyday life that enable them to feel part of the solution to urban problems.

From the perspective of SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), these findings demonstrate that urban sustainability is determined not only by physical aspects but also

by the psychological well-being and digital experiences of citizens. Exposure to urban issues on social media shapes young people's perceptions, emotions, and feelings of security towards the city. Furthermore, social media can strengthen civic engagement, a sense of community, and community resilience (Gatti & Procentese, 2024), while also providing a channel for citizens to express their views on sustainable cities and provide input to policymakers (Marzouki et al., 2021). These findings align with research that emphasizes the role of media in supporting SDG 11 by increasing transparency, public participation, and social sustainability (Alwan et al., 2025).

Therefore, sustainable urban development needs to pay attention to the dimensions of digital well-being, digital citizen engagement, and community emotional health, because cities are now experienced not only physically, but also through digital spaces.

This study is limited in scope regarding the number and profile of informants, specifically focusing on the younger generation in Bandung, meaning the findings cannot be generalized to other age groups or urban contexts. Furthermore, the phenomenological approach emphasizes the informants' subjective experiences and does not deeply examine the differing characteristics of platforms or the influence of social media algorithms. These limitations highlight the need for future research that incorporates more diverse urban contexts and informants, while also investigating the roles platforms and algorithms play in shaping experiences of urban stress and digital wellbeing.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research shows that social media is not only a source of urban information but also shapes the emotional experiences of the younger generation in Bandung. Repeated exposure to issues of traffic jams, waste, crime, and various urban issues gives rise to urban stress characterized by anxiety, fatigue, frustration, and feelings of helplessness. However, at the same time, social media also fosters awareness, hope, and a sense of belonging to the city.

To maintain digital well-being, informants developed various strategies such as limiting information exposure, curating content, and selectively engaging with urban issues. Digital well-being is defined as the ability to balance the need to stay informed with the need to maintain emotional health. Furthermore, social media encourages citizen engagement in everyday activities, such as sharing information, educating the surrounding environment, and supporting more sustainable practices for Bandung.

This research recommends that the city government, educational institutions, citizen communities, and social media platforms work together to develop digital literacy and digital well-being programs that not only help citizens

manage the emotional impact of exposure to urban information but also encourage more positive, critical, and sustainable participation in city life.

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