

Trends and Emerging Themes in Social Media Research within Digital Sociology: A Bibliometric Review (2014–2024)



Tren dan Tema Baru dalam Penelitian Media Sosial dalam Sosiologi Digital: Tinjauan Bibliometrik (2014–2024)

Musa M Juwara^{1*}, Helen Dian Fridayani²

¹²International Program of Government Affairs & Administration, Faculty of Social & Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta

¹²Jl. Ring Road Selatan, Tamantirto Village, Kasihan District, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta 55184

musa.m.isip24@mail.umy.ac.id^{1*}, helen.dian@umy.ac.id²

Corresponding author: musa.m.isip24@mail.umy.ac.id*

ARTICLE INFORMATION

<p>Keywords <i>Social Media Online; Platforms Digital; Communication; Digital Sociology;</i></p>	<p>ABSTRACT As Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) become increasingly relevant and advanced, resulting in the emergence of new subfields, this study presents a bibliometric analysis of digital sociology from 2014 to 2024, with a focus on social media research within the field of sociology. Given the growing influence of digital technologies on social institutions and interactions, this study seeks to examine emerging trends and themes. We utilised data from the Scopus database to examine 227 documents on digital sociology, including annual publication trends, leading countries, affiliations, journals, and authors. Additionally, it analysed the co-citation network by authors, journals, and keywords. The findings revealed a steady increase in publications with an annual average of approximately 10%. It identified major themes surrounding digital sociology, including digital identity, online activism and algorithms and data exposure. It highlights an inclination toward the ethical and societal consequences of digital engagement. The study’s novelty lies within the intersection between digital sociology and social media research outcomes, which is specific and timely. The study offers a comprehensive understanding of digital sociology and its thematic developments over the past decade, laying the groundwork for future research by identifying gaps and areas of interest. However, limitations include a heavy reliance on a single database and English-language sources. Future studies could focus on the evolving dynamics of trends and themes, with broader regional engagement to widen discourse in digital sociology globally.</p>
<p>Kata Kunci <i>Media Sosial Online; Platform Digital; Komunikasi; Sosiologi Digital;</i></p>	<p>ABSTRAK Seiring dengan semakin relevan dan canggihnya Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi (TIK), yang mengakibatkan munculnya subbidang baru, studi ini menyajikan analisis bibliometrik tentang sosiologi digital dari tahun 2014 hingga 2024, dengan fokus pada penelitian media sosial dalam bidang sosiologi. Mengingat pengaruh yang semakin besar dari teknologi digital terhadap institusi sosial dan interaksi, studi ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi tren dan tema yang sedang berkembang. Kami menggunakan data dari basis data Scopus untuk menganalisis 227 dokumen tentang sosiologi digital, termasuk tren publikasi tahunan, negara-negara terkemuka, afiliasi, jurnal, dan penulis. Selain itu, studi ini menganalisis jaringan co-citation berdasarkan penulis, jurnal, dan kata kunci. Temuan menunjukkan peningkatan stabil dalam publikasi dengan rata-rata tahunan sekitar 10%. Studi ini mengidentifikasi tema utama seputar sosiologi digital, termasuk identitas digital, aktivisme online, algoritma, dan paparan data. Studi ini menyoroti kecenderungan terhadap konsekuensi etis dan sosial dari keterlibatan digital. Keunikan studi ini terletak pada perpotongan antara sosiologi digital dan hasil penelitian media sosial, yang spesifik dan tepat waktu. Studi ini memberikan pemahaman komprehensif tentang sosiologi digital dan perkembangan temanya selama dekade terakhir.</p>

	<p>sekaligus menetapkan dasar untuk penelitian masa depan dengan mengidentifikasi celah dan area minat. Namun, keterbatasan meliputi ketergantungan yang berat pada satu basis data dan sumber berbahasa Inggris. Penelitian masa depan dapat fokus pada dinamika yang berkembang dari tren dan tema, dengan keterlibatan regional yang lebih luas untuk memperluas diskursus sosiologi digital secara global.</p>
<p>Article History Send 10thSeptember 2025 Review 29thOctober 2025 Accepted 3th March 2026</p>	<p>Copyright ©2027 Jurnal Aristo (Social, Politic, Humaniora) This is an open access article under the CC-BY-NC-SA license. Akses artikel terbuka dengan model CC-BY-NC-SA sebagai lisensinya.</p>



Introduction

The escalation of digital technologies and social media has profoundly influenced societies, urging in-depth research within sociology, given its role in contemporary social structures, organisational behaviour, and the diverse forms of communications, which significantly impact the sophisticated facets of digital inclusion and exclusion through access, production and skills (Robinson et al., 2020; Torpey, 2020; Xiang et al., 2023). Furthermore, Web 2.0 technologies, which refer to social media platforms, emphasise user-generated content and an engagement culture, have triggered the proliferation of social media platforms, luring users into online communities (Chen et al., 2023; Lupton, 2014). The development of modern information technology has profoundly transformed the social fabric that was initially responsible for its creation, in political and religious authorities (Andok, 2024). Given the substantial impact of the media on public opinion and discourse, as well as their crucial role in influencing decision-making, they should be at the core of environmental politics and policymaking (Domingues & Teixeira, 2024). Additionally, through the unrestricted opportunities to interact, social media has contributed significantly to human development (Li et al., 2023; Mutanda, 2024). Thus, as a discipline, sociology has been significantly influenced, leading to the emergence of digital sociology as a subfield.

As one of the most cited accounts (Deborah Lupton), articulated digital sociology based on its impacts on everyday life, datasets, such as qualitative and quantitative, and a thorough reflection on digital society, while emphasising the increasing leverage of digital technologies in sociological practices (Skopek, 2023). It also centres on the manner in which these technologies continue to reshape the social institutions, relationships and individuals, at the same time examining the significant changes brought by the digital technology (Addeo & Masullo, 2021; Martínez-Bravo et al., 2020). Furthermore, the existence of online Social Networking Sites (SNSs) constitutes an essential dimension in transforming the traditional mode of communication and the diffusion of information (Ugwudike & Sánchez-Benitez, 2024). Likewise, the expansion of digital technologies has significant implications for the global presence and identity, particularly for the youth (Wilska et al., 2023). Additionally, it is revealed that social media has enhanced social and economic interactions, while environmental activism leverages digital platforms for gathering and mobilising supporters and sharing important information (Gürlesin, 2024; Mutanda, 2024; Skopek, 2023). Thus, digital sociology has garnered research attention through discourse and conferences, with high trends of publications.

The digital society emerged following the rapid growth of technology through the appearance of modern computers and the World Wide Web in the mid-twentieth century (Di Nicola, 2022). As the trend continues, a significant milestone was achieved in the early twenty-first century, which marked the formal introduction of digital sociology, driven by the rise of media platforms, surveillance, and the wide range of impacts of digital technologies, which affect almost every facet of human life (Zhao & Wang, 2023). Early studies on digital sociology have provided rigorous insights, which offered several frameworks and theories, such as the four quadrants of digital sociology (Lupton, 2013), platform studies (Reuver et al., 2017), surveillance datafication (Gourlay, 2022), etc. However, these studies either focus broadly or narrowly on digital sociology, including specific social media platforms, without combined outcomes. For instance, Fadden, (2024) mapped the integration of AI as an educational tool in the context of digital inequality and indicated a broader growing discussion on several variables, with significant disparities from a sociological perspective. Meanwhile, other bibliometric analyses surrounding digital identity and literacy have highlighted the necessity for integrated qualitative methods from an alternative database (Baber et al., 2022; Ismail et al., 2025).

The subfield of digital sociology has attracted scholarly interest across various areas; however, its research output has become fragmented due to differing interpretations (Wang et al., 2020). This fragmentation is heightened by the absence of a systematic review to chart the knowledge landscape of social media research within the field. Bibliometric analysis, as highlighted by Oliveira et al. (2019), provides visual mapping of citations, publication trends, and leading authors, institutions, and journals. Still, as digital sociology remains a relatively new area with limited literature on social media research output, a substantial gap persists. Bridging this gap through a comprehensive bibliometric review, analysing trends, themes, leading contributors, and institutions, would be necessary for practitioners and scholars by offering systematic insights into current and future research directions and related topics. Accordingly, this study conducted such a bibliometric analysis to map trends and themes in digital sociology's social media research.

The primary objective of this study is to analyse and synthesise existing literature to identify publication trends, themes, influential works, journals, authors, and emerging topics related to social media research in digital sociology over the past decade. The study gathered relevant data from reputable journals in the Scopus database. Subsequently, it deployed bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer and Excel, focusing on bibliometric indicators and network variables, including co-occurrence, co-authorship, co-citation, annual trends, and

regional distribution. It also incorporated qualitative data for greater depth. Through this approach, the study contributes to the academic literature by mapping trends and themes in social media research within sociology, providing a clearer picture of the knowledge landscape.

Method

The study employed a bibliometric analysis approach. The Scopus database is one of the largest and most reputable abstract and citation databases for peer-reviewed literature, comprising journal articles, conference proceedings, reviews, and books, among others, for its comprehensive index across numerous disciplines (Wahid et al., 2023). Additionally, as bibliometric analysis becomes increasingly popular, Scopus is one of the few databases that can be used to conduct bibliometric analysis in a specific field by scholars worldwide, making it a suitable choice for this study. Thus, this study conducted a rigorous bibliometric analysis to provide a thorough visual mapping and description of trends and themes in social media research outcomes.

Based on this objective, the study utilised the following keywords to ensure relevance and consistency with the issue under investigation: "social media" OR "online platforms" OR "digital communication" AND "sociology" OR "digital sociology". On May 1st, 2025, this query was run in the Scopus database, and the result indicated 1,414 documents. These data comprised articles, conference papers, books, book chapters, and reviews, all of which were unfiltered, such as the type of document, subject area, language, and keywords, as well as the year range. Subsequently, a screening was carried out, limiting the document type to articles, review and conference papers, the subject area to social sciences, the language to English, and the year range to 2014-2024. The Figure below visually illustrates this.

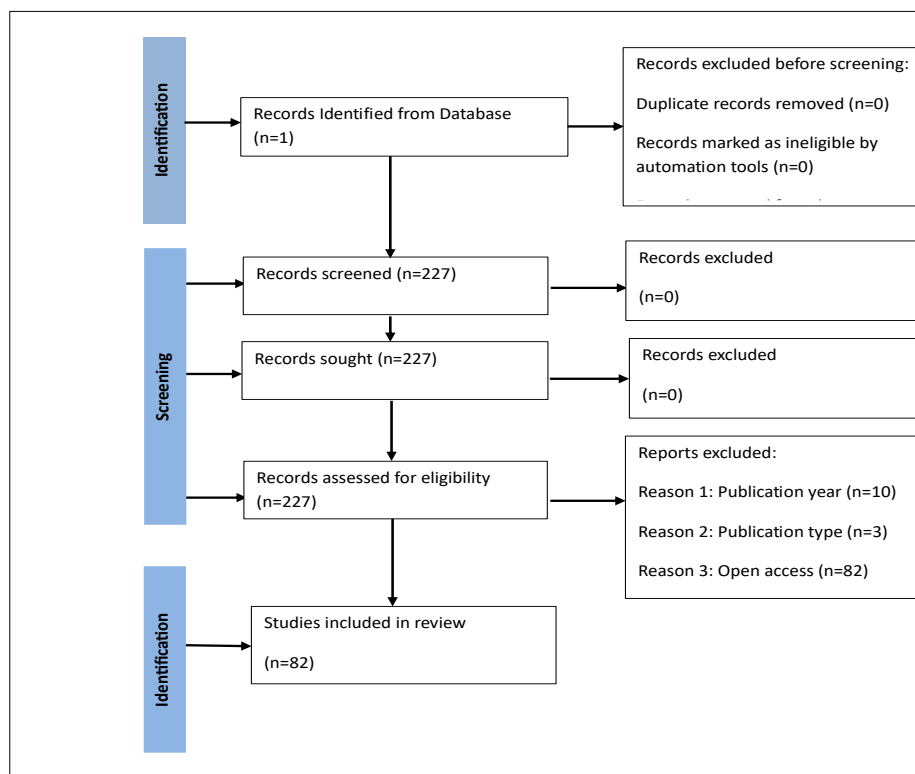


Fig. 1. Flow Diagram of Search Strategy

The results were recorded and exported for further analysis in the VOSviewer and Excel software. Through bibliographic data collected from databases such as Scopus, WoS, and PubMed, VOSviewer software allows the visual mapping of the results across various indicators, including co-citation, co-occurrence, co-authorship, etc (Baber et al., 2022). These results include the RIS (Research Information Systems Format) and CVS (Comma-Separated Values), as well as the filter count. The filtered count was exported to Excel for creating another set of specific visuals, such as annual publications, documents by territory, affiliation, and authorship, and journal.

Literature Review

Digitalisation (Information, Communication, and Technology)

Digitalisation is broadly understood as the integration of information, communication, and technology (ICT) into organisational, economic, and governance processes, fundamentally transforming how activities are performed and value is created. It extends beyond the technical act of digitising data and instead represents a structural and systemic transformation that reshapes institutional arrangements, decision-making mechanisms, and patterns of interaction among actors (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016; Tilson,

2010). Within this perspective, ICT functions as a socio-technical system in which technological capabilities interact with human, organisational, and regulatory factors. From a theoretical standpoint, digitalisation is anchored in socio-technical systems theory, which emphasises the mutual interdependence between technological infrastructures and social structures (Geels, 2004). ICT-based digitalisation alters not only operational efficiency but also power relations, governance modes, and institutional logics. Consequently, its impact cannot be assessed solely through technological availability, but must account for how information is produced and used, how communication flows are structured, and how technological infrastructure is embedded within broader institutional contexts (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001).

The information dimension of digitalisation refers to the capacity of ICT systems to generate, process, store, and analyse data in ways that support decision-making and coordination. Digital information systems reduce information asymmetry, enhance transparency, and enable evidence-based policies through real-time data access and analytical tools (Janssen & Kuk, 2016). The effectiveness of information digitalisation, however, depends on data quality, interoperability, and governance arrangements that regulate data ownership, privacy, and security. From a theoretical perspective, this dimension aligns with information asymmetry theory and the knowledge-based view, which emphasise information as a strategic resource shaping organisational and policy outcomes (Grant, 1996). The communication dimension of digitalisation captures the role of ICT in mediating interactions among individuals, organisations, and institutions. Digital communication platforms reduce transaction costs, accelerate coordination, and enable multi-directional information flows across hierarchical and sectoral boundaries (Castells, 2010). In governance and development contexts, ICT-enabled communication facilitates citizen participation, collaborative networks, and responsiveness, thereby reshaping traditional top-down governance models. This dimension is theoretically grounded in network governance theory and transaction cost economics, which explain how digital communication transforms coordination mechanisms and institutional relationships (Ansell & Gash, 2007).

The technology infrastructure dimension refers to the availability and quality of hardware, software, connectivity, and digital platforms that support information processing and communication. Robust ICT infrastructure enables scalability, integration, and innovation, while inadequate infrastructure constrains digitalisation and reinforces digital divides (Dijk, 2020). Digital divide theory and resource-based theory highlight that unequal access to technological resources limits the capacity of individuals and institutions to benefit

from digital transformation (Barney, 1991). Therefore, infrastructure readiness is a foundational condition for effective and inclusive digitalisation. Analytically, ICT digitalisation can be positioned as both an enabling and mediating variable within empirical models. As an enabling factor, it provides the technical and informational capacity required for transformation. As a mediating factor, it shapes how institutional inputs, such as policies, governance structures, and human capital, translate into outcomes such as efficiency, participation, innovation, or socio-economic inclusion (Vial, 2019). The impact of digitalisation is thus contingent upon complementary factors, including digital literacy, organisational readiness, and regulatory frameworks.

Digital Sociology

While most scholars are unanimous in their view that digital sociology is grounded on the interplay between society and digital technologies, others extend it by including knowledge, which focuses on how digitally mediated environments continue to reshape the dynamic social relations, fabrics, and power structures (Zhao & Wang, 2023). Accordingly, while it offers a comprehensive understanding of modern societies, it is inappropriate to be interpreted as the sociology of the digital age. In addition, the most recent scholarly work is remarkable, as it conceptualises digital sociology as being more than research of virtual platforms, but rather as a theoretical framework on how digital infrastructure impacts social interaction, institutions, and governance (Hikmat, 2023). Moreover, leveraging the classical sociological arguments regarding the challenges of modernity, rationality, and social order, digital sociology is building on these foundations in the digitally interrelated societies, where interaction, formation of identities, and communities are mediated by platforms at an accelerating pace (Alkhazaleh et al., 2025; Putra, 2024). Within this framing, social media emerges as a central empirical site through which broader digital transformations can be examined.

The theoretical advancements within digital sociology are potential indications for reframing sociological research, particularly in terms of traces and algorithms. In fact, the broader consensus highlighted that social and material practices can intertwine with historical, cultural and institutional natures due to the complexity of algorithms and traces as objects (Amaturo & Falco, 2022). In addition, borrowing from Gabriel Tarde, recent scholars have emphasised the emergence of a new empirical object that opposes the traditional distinction between micro and macro sociological analysis through digital traces and online-generated data of communication (Mandolessi, 2025; Pranz, 2023). Complementing this approach,

systems theory has been mobilised to explain how digital platforms operate as communication systems governed by algorithmic logics, selectively processing information and shaping visibility, relevance, and inclusion (Bojić et al., 2025). As such, social media is relatively and structurally positioned as a social connection tool and perpetuates power imbalance rather than a mere medium of communication and interaction.

As digital platforms continue to impact various integral aspects of political, economic, and cultural dimensions, digital sociology has increasingly engaged with themes, including datafication, surveillance, and data capitalism (Curran, 2023). However, this has triggered serious ethical concerns, particularly data privacy and the rapidly growing social inequality, which social media is highlighted to have been a significant contributor, transforming social life into data (Buonocore et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2022). The integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning into social media infrastructures has further intensified and exacerbated these concerns, wherein computational systems influence political polarisation, information exposure, and public opinion formation (Tuncay, 2025). Within digital sociology, these developments are theorised as manifestations of platform power and predictive governance, reshaping agency and autonomy in digital societies.

Another critical area of research outcome of social media is the issue of social inequality and online stratification within digital sociology. For instance, recent literature has shown that despite the extensive usage of social media, access, benefits, and skills remain largely unequally distributed across various social groups, perpetuating existing inequalities based on education, age, and socioeconomic status, particularly between urban and rural areas (Go et al., 2025; Lybeck et al., 2024). Furthermore, digital sociology portrays these disparities not merely as technical limitations, but as structurally ingrained embodiment of digital inequality that manifests within the broader social arrangements (Robinson et al., 2020). Accordingly, with the concept of “digital inequality stack”, scholars argue that layers such as network infrastructure, access to connectivity, and devices, as well as differentiated consumption, production, and programming, result in a higher level of disparity. Social media research within this trajectory, therefore, highlights a timely multifaceted approach, including policy-oriented, intervention-based, and inclusion-focused efforts towards digital transformation.

The literature has identified user-generated content and engagement as a distinct thematic cluster in social media research. Bibliometric and thematic analysis depict an increasingly rising research focus on the active creation, distribution, and challenge of meanings by the users of social media platforms, which affect consumer behaviour, political

mobilisation, digital activism, and social movements (Dana et al., 2024; Ilias et al., 2024). Digitally, these practices are perceived to be performances of networked participation that are influenced by the very structures of platforms, the logics of algorithms, and the logics of commerce, yet are not deemed as purely expressive activities at an individual level (Mihelj, 2021).

The spread of social media research has been characterised by great innovation methodologically. Bibliometric analysis has recently emerged as an important means of mapping intellectual structures, research trends, and developing themes in digital sociology and similar domains (Chu, 2024; Dana et al., 2024). Meanwhile, researchers also argue that computational methods should be supplemented with critical sociological understanding and propose mixed and interface-based approaches to understand the intricacy of digitally mediated social phenomena (Ślosarski & Włoch, 2025). As such, using the theoretical kaleidoscope, Kuhn et al., (2023) believed that it is an important instrument to describe digital inequality, a complex and ever-evolving phenomenon, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The same methodological shifts are indicative of wider epistemological transformations in the discipline of sociology, in which large-scale data analysis is becoming more closely bound to theory-oriented inquiry.

Broadly, this literature indicates a distinct shift in social media research in digital sociology, where issues of interaction and participation with respect to more recent interests in datafication, algorithmic governance and inequality. Nevertheless, the current literature remains divided according to themes, approaches, and fields of study. The presented fragmentation supports the necessity to conduct a systematic bibliometric analysis that traces the trends, predominant research groups, and developing theoretical directions between 2014 and 2024, as well as adding a more coherent conceptual framework for the role of social media in the modern digital sociological context.

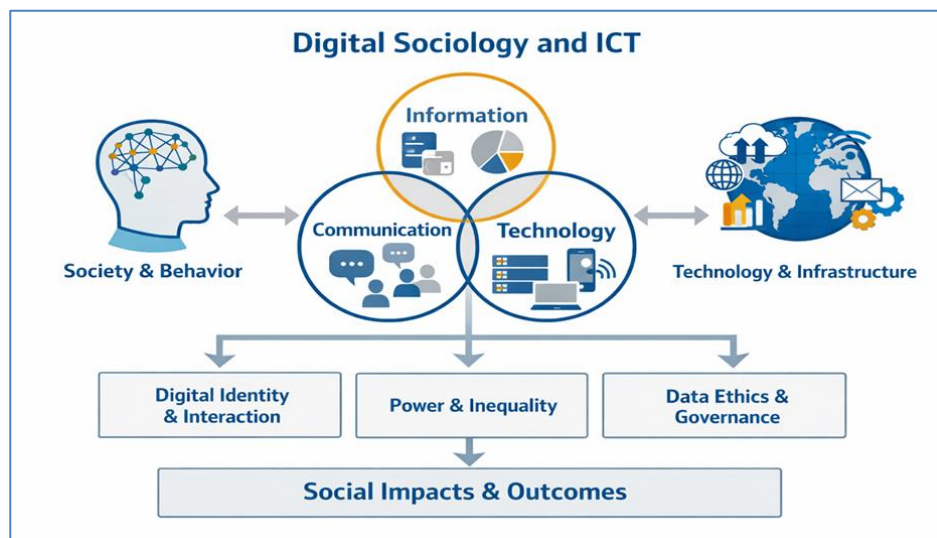


Fig.2. Digital Sociology and ICT

Source: Processed by the authors

Result and Discussion

Descriptive analysis

Figure 2 illustrates the annual publication trend of social media research within digital sociology. From 2014 to 2017, there was a steady increase of two or more additional publications per year until 2019, when it somewhat declined. Similarly, there was a notable surge between 2020 and 2022, which marked the peak number of publications, suggesting its scholarly interest, possibly driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, a time when media platforms were highly used comparatively. By 2024, it had dropped from 32 to 27 after 2022. This indicates an average annual growth rate of social media research publications within digital sociology of approximately 10%. The surge aligns significantly with previous results, as it is revealed that topics with increasing trends account for 21%, which includes methodology, technology, and application (Karami et al., 2020). Furthermore, Darko et al. (2022) concluded that social media is both economical and efficient in recruiting health research participants, with significant leverage of social media exclusively, while highlighting the intricate nature of how media studies have become. Moreover, this reflects the intense digital consumption, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating growing scholarly interest and the maturing of the field.

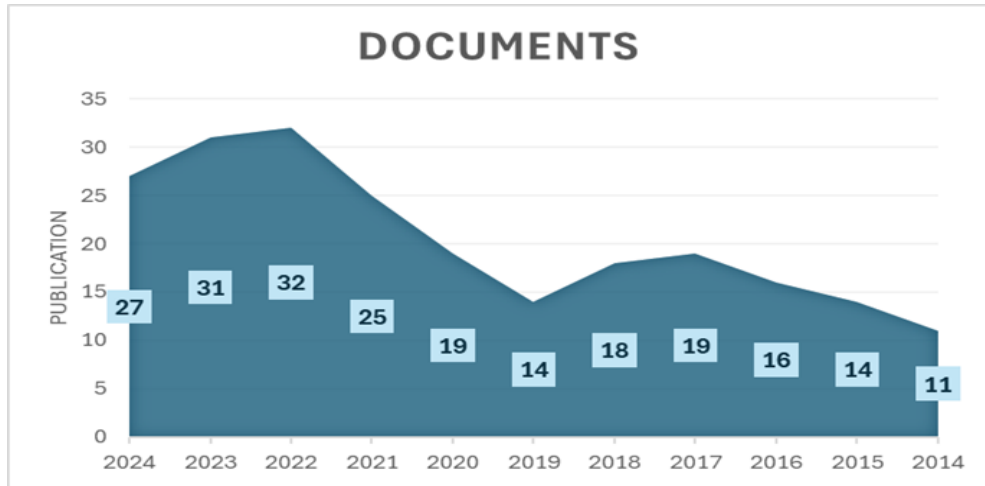


Fig. 3. Annual Publication of Social Media Research
Source: Processed in Excel from Scopus Database, 2025

Figure 3 presents the geographic distribution of annual publications. Some of the leading countries include the United States (US) (Baber et al., 2022), with sixty-four (64) documents. This is symbolic of the US, as one of the leading countries in technology, with a high level of scientific research and the most cited publications. A study by Darko et al, (2022), revealed that 66% of its reviewed publications were from the United States (US). Likewise, the United Kingdom (UK) (Thaha et al., 2021) produced forty articles, Australia, with seventeen, Canada, with eleven, Italy and the Netherlands, each with nine articles, and so on. Accordingly, the analysis showed these countries to be the top contributors to social media research. However, developing countries seem to be dominated by developed countries, possibly due to financial leverage, stronger environmental policies, and academic infrastructure. This significantly influences the issue of global inclusivity in social media research. While developed countries have higher internet penetration rates, developing countries tend to have a higher number of social media users. For instance, it is revealed that 90% of low-income countries (LIC) used social media to get information about COVID-19 (Blandi et al., 2022). Overall, this indicates an increasing number of publications by these countries and rising countries, as illustrated below.

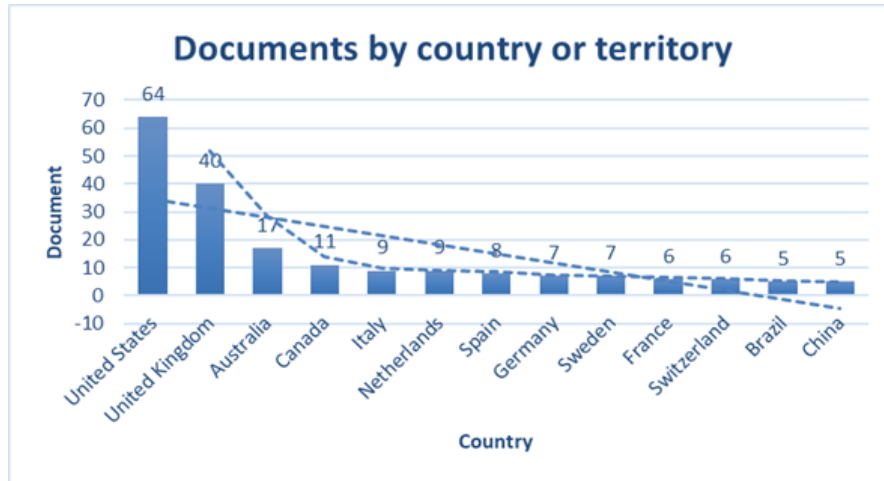


Fig. 4. Document by country or territory
 Source: Processed in Excel from Scopus Database, 2025

While publication affiliations could be from universities, research institutions, or organisations, the analysis of the study revealed that all the leading affiliations are universities, which have been active in the field of digital sociology and social media research globally. These institutions include the Queensland University of Technology, the University of Sydney, and the University of Oxford, with five documents each, followed by the University of Amsterdam, the University of Michigan, and the University of Melbourne, with four articles. The remaining universities on the list either produce three articles or fewer, including the University of Colorado Boulder, Loughborough University, etc, as illustrated in the Figure below.

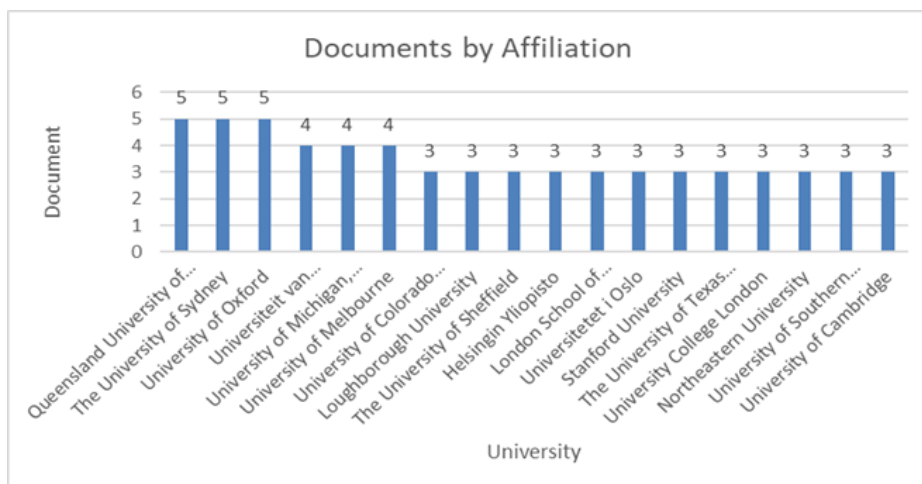


Fig. 5. Document by affiliation
 Source: Processed in Excel from Scopus Database, 2025

Although with the time confinement, the study is limited to, not many journals have been traced. Meanwhile, journals such as Information Communication and Society (14%), Social

Science and Medicine (12%), Critical Sociology (6%), New Media and Society and Social Media and Society (5%), Big Data and Society and others with 4% or less, etc, have made a significant contribution. The Information Communication and Society is one of the highly impactful and ranked journals in its respective fields, with 4.2 impact, a Q1 ranking and an H-Index of over 120 (IC&S, 2023). Additionally, it is highly ranked in both communication and sociology, especially in sociology, with a Q1 ranking of 95%. Social media research within digital sociology is increasingly gaining research attention among scholars, highlighting its interdisciplinary interest. Moreover, a journal with a high H-Index indicates its academic impact (Wang et al., 2020).

Table 1. Social media research output from various journals

Source	Documents	Percentage
Information Communication and Society	12	14%
Social Science and Medicine	10	12%
Critical Sociology	5	6%
New Media and Society	4	5%
Social Media and Society	4	5%
Big Data and Society	3	4%
Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research	3	4%
Sociology of Health and Illness	3	4%
British Journal of Sociology	2	2%
Critical Studies in Education	2	2%
Current Sociology	2	2%
Digital Journalism	2	2%

Source: Processed in Excel from Scopus Database, 2025

Here, the analysis identified some of the prominent authors in the subfield of digital sociology concerning social media, based on the data collected. These include Barnes, N., Murthy, D., Caliandro, A., Costas, R., Ferrucci, P., etc. These scholars have made significant contributions to the field of sociology by examining the interrelationships among technology, society, knowledge, and other critical areas, which have provided vital contexts that are essential for assessing and analysing current digital phenomena. Figure 5 presents some of the influential authors in digital sociology.

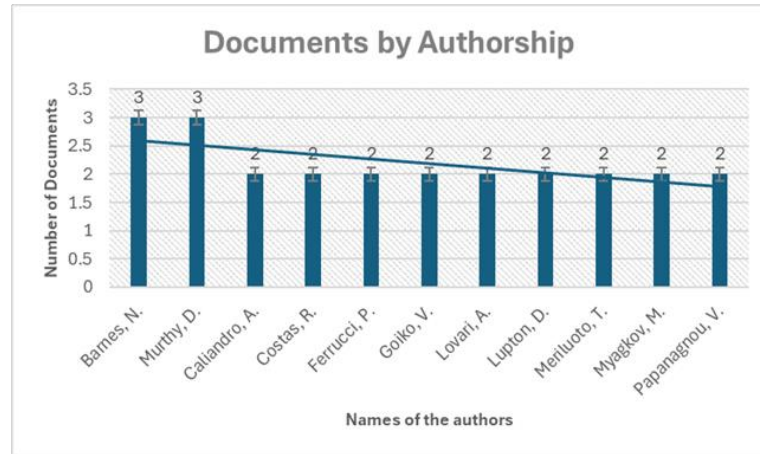


Fig. 6. Document by Authorship

Source: Processed in Excel from Scopus Database, 2025

This study utilised three types of documents, namely, articles, conference proceedings, and review papers. After the filtering, the results are as follows: the aggregated documents were reduced from 1,414 to 227, out of these 227 documents, 203 (90%) were articles, 12 (5%) were reviews, and 10 (approximately 5%) were conference papers. This indicates that journal articles are based on a solid foundation in peer-reviewed literature. Additionally, conference papers and reviewed literature are equally significant, suggesting thorough empirical evidence as shown in Figure 6 below. However, among these 227 documents, only 82 were accessible.

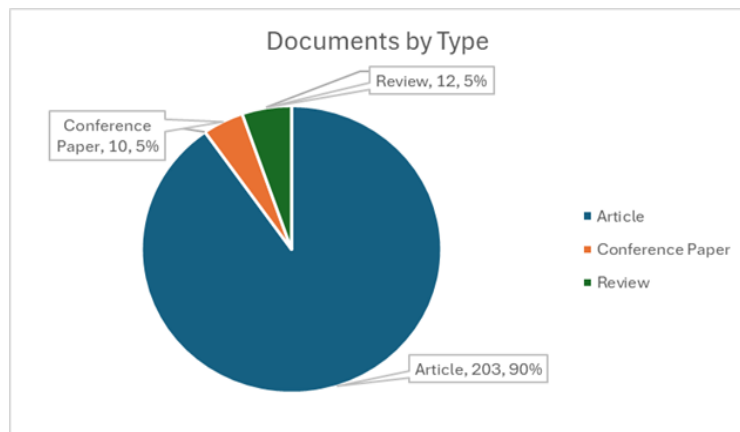


Fig. 7. Document by Type

Source: Processed in Excel from Scopus Database, 2025

Network Visualisation

The Figure below illustrates clusters of highly influential authors and the correlation among them in the subfield of digital sociology over the past decade. As shown, while each node represents an author, the breadth of these nodes is proportional to the strength and quantity of their publications. In addition, the colour clusters illustrated a group or community

of scholars with a particular focus within the field. The figure suggests that Bourdieu, P., Thelwall, M., Lupton, D., Menczer, F., Wang, X., and Ellison, N.B. are some of the most influential authors. The red cluster led by Bourdieu, P., Lupton., D., and Boyd, D., with a potential centred focus around COVID-19 and interpersonal communication (Maurício et al., 2024). Similarly, the blue cluster likely emphasises adults and psychology, which is dominated by Wang, X., Zhang, Y., Yang, J., and Liu, Y. Another prominent group led by Menczer, F., Liu, H., Lazer, D., Wang, S., and Palen, L., tends to tailor their focus on social media and social networking. Although isolated, Thelwall, M., Haustein, S., and Costas, R., are likely to be central to public health from a digital technology lens.

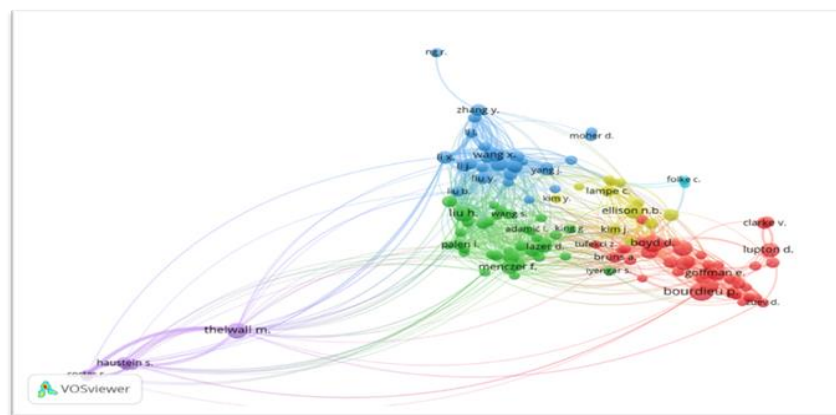


Fig. 8. Co-citation Network by Authorship
 Source: *Processed by the authors with VOSviewer, 2025*

The co-citation network by journal illustrates the frequency with which journals are cited together in publications. This suggests the relationship between interdisciplinarity. Based on the figure, the PLoS One journal is seen to be highly interdisciplinary, acting as a bridge among other journals, while also being highly impactful (Fadden, 2024; Wang et al., 2020). Other cited sources with significant interdisciplinary networks include New Media and Society and the American Sociological Review.

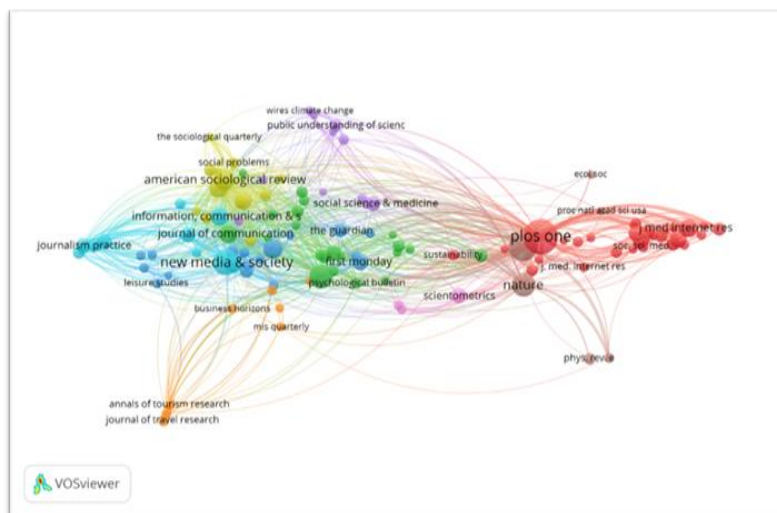


Fig. 9. Co-citation Network by Journal

Source: Processed by the authors with VOSviewer, 2025

The figure below illustrates the frequencies of occurrences of the same journal publication, indicating authors' itemised keywords and their relationship. Specifically, the nodes show the relationship between these topics and their recurrence. Additionally, while the larger nodes represent the most frequently occurring keywords, the smaller nodes represent the least frequently occurring keywords. The colours also indicate the various aspects, with the light colours representing the most frequently occurring and vice versa. Sociology and social media, as shown in the centre, are the cardinal and most frequently occurring keywords, which indicate them as the hub from which related themes emanate. Furthermore, the main keywords in the blue cluster, including female, male, adult, and psychology, tend to focus on the impacts of digital technologies. The subsequent clusters highlight a diverse and interdisciplinary approach that provides a profound understanding of digital technology, particularly in relation to social media and society. Moreover, a study by Karami et al. (2020) identified persistent words, including social and media.

Journals such as Information Communication & Society, Social Science & Medicine, Critical Sociology, and New Media & Society were found to have made substantial contributions to digital sociology, a field significantly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study also indicated an increasing shift to digital surveillance, algorithm transparency, and data exposure, driven by advances in artificial intelligence. These results suggest a rapid maturing of the field into an interdisciplinary one, evidenced by its evolving themes and trends. This study contributes to the literature by providing research output of social media research within digital sociology through bibliometric analysis. However, the study had several limitations. The results are restricted to a specific search query that is exclusively focused on the social sciences. Additionally, it depended heavily on Scopus while omitting other essential contributions. The processed data source was limited to articles, conference papers, and reviews in English, which may have introduced language bias. Lastly, the study employed bibliometric analysis without an in-depth fieldwork observation. Further studies should focus on the evolving dynamics of trends and themes in social media research output, with broader regional engagement to widen discourse in digital sociology globally.

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