PROMOTING SOCIAL SPACE FOR AN APPROPRIATE SELF-ETHICAL IDENTITY IN SOCIAL MEDIA WITH THAI YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were 1) to study the construction of social space and the presentation of self-ethical identity on social media among Thai youth, 2) to develop a psychological training program to enhance the ethical skill of social media usage for Thai youth, and 3) to propose methods in promoting Thai youth to create a social space and present their self-ethical identity appropriately and ethically. A mixed-methods approach was applied in this study. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants which included 62 university students who had taken the general courses in the second semester of 2021, then completed the questionnaires and go through an in-depth semi structured interview. In addition, there were 64 university students who participated in an operational training for enhancing an ethical skill of social media usage for Thai youth voluntarily. The questionnaires, the in-depth semi structured interviews, and an operational training program were used to collect data from the participants which were analyzed using content analysis and the SPSS software (version 26). The research results showed that majority of the participants posted or commented about the social injustice from their own stories but most of them never posted or commented about race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, social class, and their own needs. In addition, most of the participants had good knowledge, understanding of things, and behaved properly. Moreover, the mean scores of an ethical skill of social media usage of participants before and after attending the operational training program were significantly different at 0.01 level. This research has provided a deeper insight into social media usage among Thai youth. The findings of this research will be useful as guidelines for teaching, learning and counseling to promote Thai youth to show their self-ethical identity creatively and appropriately.

Keywords: Construction of Space, Presentation of Self-Ethical Identity, Social Media, Youth

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, social media has played a huge role in the lives of Thai youth. According to statistical data, the Thai population in the Gen Y range (born between 1981 and 2000) had the highest rate of internet use compared to people of other ages in 2019 (10 hours 36 minutes a day) (ETDA, 2020) and 2020 (12 hours 26 minutes per day) (ETDA, 2020). There have been a number of research studies on the benefits of social media, such as mobile phone addiction rather than attention to perientity (Phubbing), which can negatively affect the perception on the quality of communication and relationship satisfaction (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018).

In regards to identity, Trepte & Loy (2017) discussed the background of the social identity theory that was invented by Tajfel in 1978, which was later developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. The important idea is that individuals tend to categorize themselves into groups based on their characteristics and compare them to their own values if they feel that they are "inappropriate". A person who is part of a group is classified as an in-group, but if a person perceives that he is not a member of that group, they are classified as out-groups. Group assessment and the values of group members will be an important component of the development of a person's social identity. However, the study of identity and self-expression lacks conceptual clarity (Orsatti & Riemer, 2015). In particular, the pattern of ethical identity is

expressed through youth social media, while some research studies have been done on the construction of social spaces. Also, most of the research involves the representation and sustainment of the identity of the group or ethnicity, such as Thongkaew & Siriwong (2016) who conducted a study on the social spaces of people with disabilities. A research done by Mulmanee (2016) studied the creation of cultural social spaces in the Thung Kula Rong Hai, Suvarnabhumi District, in Roi Et Province. However, recent study of the issue has not covered the creation of social spaces and the ethical identity of young people on social media in a concrete way, whereas social media is an area that is easily accessible to youth and are used for expressing their emotions.

The researchers recognized the importance of studying the use of social media for Thai youth by focusing on the situation and patterns of creating social spaces and ethical identities on social media of Thai youth today. Also, the study is on seeking ways to promote and encourage young people to create appropriate social spaces and social media identities, as well as applying the knowledge to analyze current youth problems in planning for prevention and resolution of those problems in a timely manner. This is in line with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology's Digital Development Strategy which is focused on the idea of a "Digital Thailand" whereas the concept is on being able to effectively build and leverage digital technology in the economic and social development of the country with one key goal: to prepare the population on having the knowledge and skills to live and pursue careers in the digital world (Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, 2016). Therefore, the researchers used their knowledge and experience in cross-cultural social and psychological research to study the issue by defining three objectives of the research: 1) to study the situation of creating a social space; 2) to create a model of psychological training to enhance ethical skills in using social media for Thai youth; and 3) to propose ways to promote and encourage Thai youth to create social spaces and ethical identities on social media appropriately and ethically by using mixed research to obtain comprehensive and insightful information to explain the phenomenon of Thai youth using social media (as shown in figure 1)
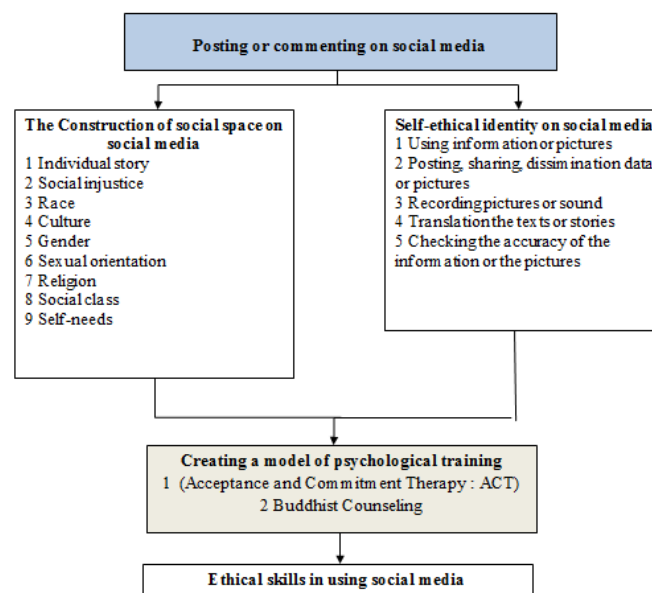

FIGURE 1
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The next section focuses on the literature review which are relevant to social space, self-ethical identity, social media and Thai youth. In addition, the next two section illustrate the methodology that was applied in this study, and the results of this study. The final section

describes discussion, conclusion, research limitations, practical implications and theoretical Implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Space

In recent years, researchers and scholars have defined the meaning of social spaces differently, such as Thongkaew & Siriwong (2016) who said that creating a social space in the field of work for people with disabilities is a step towards creating an identity or symbolic meaning that replaces disability in terms of working so that disabled groups are accepted in their own capacity and recognized by others, while Masso, Opermann & Eljand (2014) explained that creating social spaces is a process that occurs between individuals, leading to the creation of meaning, knowledge and institutions that will promote the ability to communicate between individuals. Therefore, it can be said that social spaces are a combination between two or more individuals with the same goals for certain purposes, such as power bargaining, identification, etc., where the process of creating social spaces of individuals that are unfair or trying to create bargaining power for their own group can be done in a variety of ways. For example, the creation of social and cultural spaces of local politicians is divided into two forms: the establishment group, which aims to organize activities or help people and volunteer groups, and wanting to develop locally through the cooperation of kinship and people in the community (Worasuwanroj & Phrakru Rattanasutaporn, 2019), while some people choose to use social media (Instagram) to communicate about health to express their identity and health power (Waiwek, 2016)

The Production of Space

As for the theoretical concepts related to social space, Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith (1991) argued that social space is not a commodity but a subset that forms and surrounds the relationship of coexistence. Also, the resulting consequence, events, and a series of actions cannot be reduced to generalization, and the social space also represents the diversity of knowledge. Later, Fuchs said, le Febiré's concept is understood that digital capitalism creates an area of alienation. Furthermore, digital society needs the digital media and the Internet to be socially connected together and being auto-managed while humans themselves are threatened by social problems such as right-wing movements, nationalist ideas, or popular ideas. The Marxist humanist concepts that LeFebir adheres to will help us understand the reasons and solutions to those problems (Fuchs, 2019). In recent years, there has been research involving the creation of social spaces on a number of issues. For example, displaced Isaan Thais have a way of creating social spaces of diverse groups through radio programs, book preparation, tourism, building spaces through social media, establishing the Lanna Isaan Club, and attending merit-making events (Intasena, Hongsuwan & Wannakit, 2017). In addition, studies have shown that the alcoholic beverage habits of female students will help them be accepted as part of the discipline and faculties they are studying in, as well as reflecting on modern feminism. Making the transition from being a student to a responsible individual, and being able to take care of themselves are the ideal characteristic of being a mature adult (Sin-ampol & Juntima, 2018).

Although identity causes the definition and classification of a person's characteristics, identity remains a complex form for measurement, difficult-to-evaluate as a vision, and ambiguous in defining its meaning (Saleem, Iqbal & Jabeen, 2019). Scholars and researchers discussed the meaning of identity differently. Thongkaew & Siriwong (2016) said that maintaining the identity of people with disabilities in work is to maintain the identity of people with disabilities under their attitudes and abilities, dissect the learning process, develop and restore their work potential, and transfer them to other people with disabilities in order to create a common identity of people with disabilities whose ability to work will affect awareness and

create social acceptance. Meanwhile, Leary & Tangney (2012) said that identity is a character and feature of social relationships, roles, and membership of social groups, which describes the characteristics of individuals born in the past, present or future that a person expects to aspire to, try to be, or fearful of. Therefore, it may be concluded that identity is therefore a person's perceived character, and that one should understand and accept themselves according to their potential, which may be shown to others without a person knowing or being unaware of it.

Identity

Identity formation is an important development in adolescents as it helps to describe one's personal thoughts and way of life as individuals amid global changes (Saleem, Iqbal & Jabeen, 2019). Trepte & Loy (2017) stated that the social identity theory was invented by Tajfel in 2005, developed in 1978, and then redeveloped by Tajfel & Turner in 1979. The important idea is that individuals tend to categorize themselves into groups. It is assessed based on the characteristics of each group and compared to its own values. If an individual feels he/she is part of a group, then the person is considered an insider group. However, if an individual perceives himself/herself not a member of that group then he/she is classified as an outsider. Social grouping, group assessment and the values of group members are essential components of the development of a person's social identity, and self-esteem, while the reinforcement of negative social identity is the competitive behavior, social status alteration, or cognitive strategies that tend to create a positive insider image. Leary & Tangney (2012) mentioned about Ericsson's theory which emphasize on developing a person's identity through exploration and obligations, and Ericsson uses the term identity while others use the term self-concept. Additionally, Thanyalak Boonlue & Prateep Peuchthonglang (2021) indicated that there were 5 patterns that Thai youth applied to express their cultural identity in life. They consisted of 1) ethnographic identity, 2) personal identity, 3) sexual identity, 4) indivisible self and 5) multidimensional identity. However, this recent study did not focus on self-ethical identity among Thai youth.

The Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity

When considering the presentation of the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity, there is a core of self-perception known as the inner self at the center of the multidimensional identity and around the core of self-perception which is connected to the core. The dimensions related to the external environment include gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, religion, and social class (Jones & Mcewen, 2000).

The Indivisible Self

Later on, Jane E. Myers and Thomas J. Sweeney has proposed the concept called "The Indivisible Self" which has been developed from a previous study in the form of happiness called the "Wheel of Wellness" that holisticity consists of 5 main elements with 17 sub-elements; the relevant context which has an institutional and earthly context that changes over time (Myers & Sweeney, 2004).

In recent years, there have been many research studies on identity issues, especially the identity of Thai youth, such as studies finding on adolescents in Bangkok having the highest holist city in identity, and the lowest priority and holist city is physical identity because such adolescents are encouraged to develop their own values, safety, and improve their quality of life (Nakto, Saenubol, Mekkhachorn & Sirikit, 2017). The autonomous choice is based on a sibling relationship, in which such relationships sometimes occur through social media and become real-life relationships (Sibling Click Lovers). It was also found that friendships formed through the Camfrog program helping to alleviate the loneliness of webcam girls was a value affecting the relationship (Apichayakul, France & Richardson, 2562).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a mixed methods approach. The sample group of this research was 64 students pursuing a bachelor's degree at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, Chiang Mai and enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2020. Purposive sampling was done by the researchers in selecting the students who were willing to cooperate in filling out the questionnaire and go through an interview process, which enabled the researchers to conduct a workshop with the samples to enhance their ethical skills in using social media. The samples were 64 students who are pursuing a bachelor's degree at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna Chiang Mai and enrolled in the second semester of Academic Year 2020. The 64 students agreed to participate in the training. The data collection tools in this research include 1) a general data questionnaire, 10 check lists, 2) social media space creation questionnaires. After conducting a pilot study with a Cronbach's Alpha sentiment of 0.83 3), a social media identity interview was conducted in which researchers used semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect data from samples, and 4) psychological training was implemented to enhance the ethics of social media usage for the youths which was based on an Acceptance and Commitment Therypy (ACT) and Buddhist Counseling. All questionnaires had been approved by the ethics committee of Rajamangala University of Technology, Chiang Mai.

This research divided the data analysis into two parts: quantitative data analysis using frequency, percentage, t-test, and qualitative data analysis by content analysis method.

RESULTS

Decriptive Data Analysis

The overall number of people that took part in this study was 62, with the majority of the participants being male students (83.87 percent). The majority of the students were 19 - 20 years old, accounting for 48.39 percent, followed by 21 - 22 years old, representing for 43.55 percent, and students aged 23 - 24 years old, accounting for 8.06 percent. All students were Thai. The majority of the students were also discovered to be Buddhists. Christian students came in second with 93.55 percent. Students who do not belong to any religion accounted for 3.23 percent. Meanwhile, students of other religions accounted for 1.61 percent respectively. The majority of the students were in their first year, accounting for 50% of the total, followed by the third year, accounting for 19.35 percent, studying in the second year was at 14.52 percent, studying in the fourth year was at 11.29 percent, and studying in another year accounted for 4.84 percent.
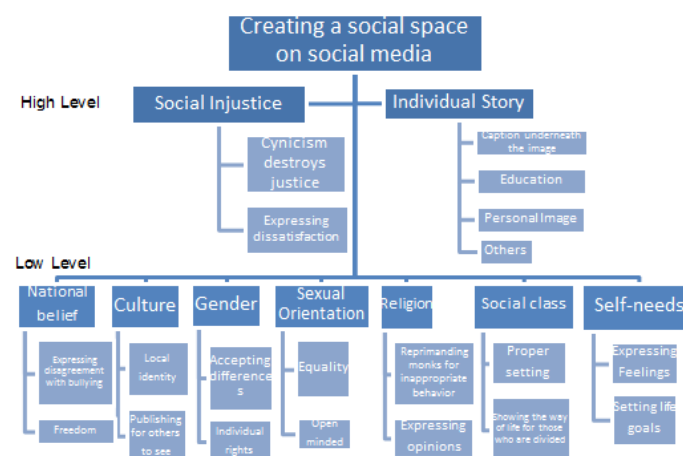

FIGURE 2
CREATING A SOCIAL SPACE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The Construction of Social Space on Social Media

The results of analyzing data about social media space creation and social media presence in the sample showed that the majority of students used to post or comment on messages on social media because they wanted to express their personal opinions on issues such as politics, answering questions, and many other factors. Whereas the issues that students posted or commented on social media were about unfairness in their own society or events relating to them, the findings showed that most students received positive feedback after posting or commenting on the messages in social media.

However, most students never post or comment on issues about race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, social class, and even their own preferences due to a variety of different reasons: firstly, some students think they shouldn't post certain issues because it's not possible to elaborate in greater details. Secondly, the decision to post or comment on social media depends on the personality of the students, that is, some students lean more towards peace and do not want to get into an argument with others. They are not comfortable in posting or commenting on cultural issues due to the nature of repercussion if done so. Some students consider about the self-impact after posting, while others view it as a personal matter, and some accept differences in gender or sexual orientation. Finally, some students choose to discuss their needs with family members or close friends instead of posting or commenting on social media (as shown in figure 2).
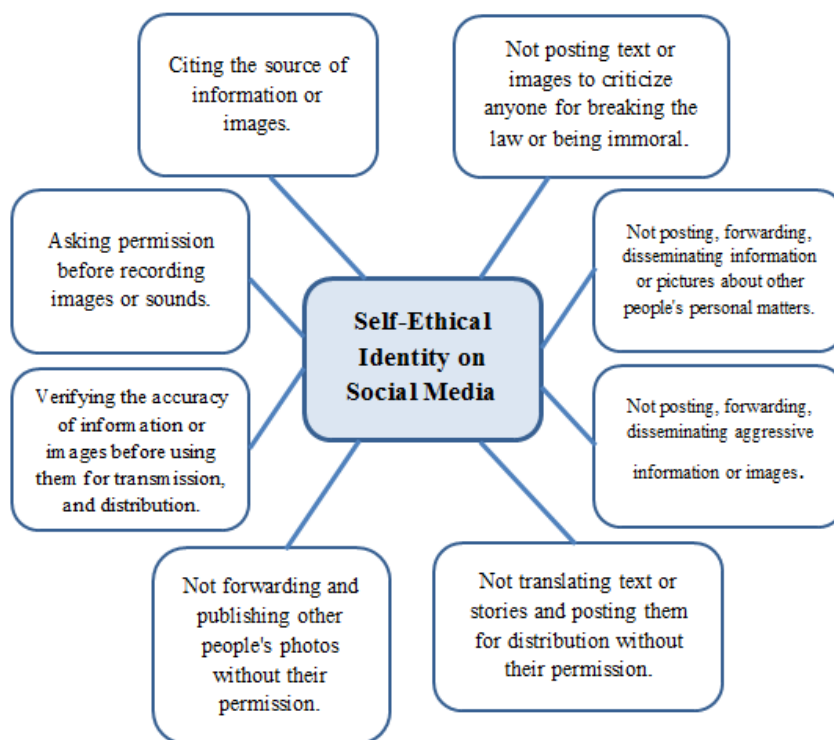

FIGURE 3
SELF-ETHICAL IDENTITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Self-Ethical Identity on Social Media

When considering the ethical identity of identity on social media, it was found that the majority of students are cognitive and behave in a way that represents an ethical identity on social media: 1) Referring to the source of information or images searched from social media before ingesting the information. 2) Asking permission for a person or group before recording an image or audio. 3) Verifying the accuracy of information or images before using them for forwarding or publishing them. 4) Not forwarding or publishing photos of other people without

permission. 6) Not posting, transmitting, or publishing information or images about violent aggression. 7) Not posting, transmitting, or publishing information or images about other people's personal matters. And, 8) Not posting messages or images to criticize those who break the law or behave in an immoral way. However, some students never asked for permission in using information or images searched from social media before passing them on or publishing because they rarely share stories on social media, while some students never publish information at all (as shown in figure 3).

It was also found that the mean scores of ethical skills in using social media before and after attending the workshop to enhance ethical skills in using social media for youths were significantly different at the level 0.01 (as shown in Table 1). In addition, it was found that the average score of the ethical skills questionnaire in using social media after training was 2.97 more than the average score before the training, or 14.85%.

Table 1 MEAN STANDARD DEVIATION AND MEAN TEST OF ETHICAL SKILL SCORES IN SOCIAL MEDIA USE BEFORE AND AFTER THE PARTICIPANTS ATTENDED THE TRAINING					
Score	Total	Average	Standard Deviation	t	p
Pre-training	64	14.89	2.31	-5.17**	.000
Post-training	64	16.59	2.47		

**$p<0.01$

At the final stage, the researchers applied all results to develop a handbook for promoting Thai youth to create a social space and present their self-ethical identity appropriately and ethically.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From the analysis of the data, it was found that most students posted or commented on social media about injustice in society or their own stories, possibly because the issues affected their lives. Students directly coupled with the advancements in technology and communication today have made it possible to be quickly informed about inequality and social issues, making it easier to post or comment on social media. It is also convenient that such posting or commenting may be possible either in terms of encouraging or expressing displeasure and criticizing the situation. Based on Fuchs, 2019, Lefebvre's concept of space management, proposed in 1991, reflects that social media has facilitated a differentiated space, in which adolescents can use to solve the current social problems by fighting for fairness, or showing social, political, environmental or cultural standpoints, which may lead to youth groups or political movements. This is because such posts or comments can become a starting point for teenagers with similar beliefs and attitudes to come together to do activities together and fight the mainstream power. It clearly shows the that identity of an adolescent is not able to express reality. Because if they really did that their actions may not be accepted by their own family, friends or society which can sometimes be inconsistent with one's original beliefs and attitudes. The findings support other research which assist in providing a better understanding on the process of assimilation and identity creation with like-minded political parties; even if a non-violent post expresses disagreement with anti-Semitism, black and/or gender choice, their popularity rating continues to increase and decline within two years of joining the urban group (Scrivens, Davies & Frank, 2020). Also, these findings are in line with previous study which indicated that there are demographic differences between those who decide to post and the owners of popular posts, and that sociocultural styles may affect modesty and the ways of communicating with others (Andres-Bray, Ocumpaugh & Baker, 2019).

However, most students never post or make comments on issues of race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, social class, and their needs due to a number of different reasons: First of all, some issues are sensitive in Thai society, such as politics, religion, race, culture, gender and educational level, etc. Raising such issues face-to-face or through social media can cause some conflicts. Second, the decision to post or comment on social media depends on the personality of the students, that is, some students do not want to argue with others and therefore do not want to post or comment on cultural issues, while some students take things into account. Although the impact will occur as some students view it as personal or not their own, and some students accept gender differences or sexual orientation and therefore do not post or express about it. Some students also choose to discuss their needs with family members or close friends instead of posting or commenting on social media. Such information supports a research study that has found that an immediate or perceived atmosphere may influence a person's desire to post their opinions, and when their opinions are only a minority of opinions, or messages posted do not match their own opinions, they are more likely not to post any messages (Yun & Park, 2011). Also, these results seem to be consistent with another research which found that even if students do not post comments, they are actively involved in learning, especially reading, rereading, and revisiting online databases (Wilton, 2018).

The results also showed that most of the students had the knowledge, understanding and behaviors demonstrating their ethical identity on social media as follows: 1) Citing the source of information or images searched on social media before applying the information to be used for forwarding or dissemination. 2) Asking for permission from the person or group of people before recording the pictures or sound. 3) Checking the accuracy of the information or the pictures before using the information for transmission or dissemination. 4) Not forwarding or disseminating other people's pictures without their permission. 5) Not translating the texts or stories that are searchable on social media and post, transmit or distribute without getting permission from the author of the work. 6) Not posting, transmitting, or distributing information or pictures about violent aggression. 7) Not posting, forwarding, or disseminating information or pictures about other people's personal matters. And finally, 8) not posting text or pictures to criticize anyone who has done something illegal or commiting an immoral act. However, some students never ask permission from the owner of the information or images they searched on social media before using the information for transmission or dissemination for various reasons, such as thinking they rarely share stories on social media, and thinking that it is just a message. Or images are used for learning and therefore there is no need in asking for permission from the owner. Another type of behavior is forgetting to ask for permission from the owner of the data or image, or being unaware of the owner's data source or image. These research findings are in accordance with the ethical principles in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These include the following: 1) Not providing false information. 2) Not distorting information. 3) Not accessing other people's information without permission. 4) Not disclosing other people's information without permission. 5) Not destroying information. 6) Not controlling partial or the whole entire system. 7) Not making others understand that you are another person. 8) Interfering with the service of the server. 9) Not creating or distributing malicious programs called Malware that was made to harass, destroy, or damage the computer system. 10) Not annoying others, such as sending emails to many users to advertise certain products which is identified as spamming. 11) Not producing or using spyware, which is sending personal information of the person to another person or other organization without their permission. And finally, 12) not creating or using a virus to damage other users of the service (Aranyawet, 2020). However, although most students are ethical in using social media, some students risk infringing the rights of others by posting, forwarding or disseminating false information, as well as the risk of committing a misconduct act that goes against the legislative laws (Cyber Security Act B.E. 2019)

As Trepte & Loy (2017) mentioned, the history of social identity theory can be very useful in analyzing the social media use among Thai youths. Recognizing that one is part of a group or a member of an inner circle tends to dare to express opinions, feelings, or identities on

the basis of moral ethics, especially doctrinal principles. In Buddhism as a guide to behavior, on the contrary, if a youth perceives himself as a non-member, does not receive attention or recognition from other members, he/she is more likely to be silent or shy about his or her identity, and this research supports the analysis of identity representations of Thai youths based on the various dimensions of identity (Jones & Mcewen, 2000) and the concept of self-sufficiency (Myers. & Sweeney, 2004). The identity of Thai youth is dynamic and is related to the context of the external environment of Thai society such as gender, race, culture, religion, politics, and social class in Thai society.

In addition, it was found that the mean scores of ethical skills in using social media-online before and after the training were significantly different at the 0.01 level. Ethical social media use after training was 14.85% higher than the average score before training. The research results further support the idea of Kanchang, Wisitsorasak, Auamcharoen & Kaiwan (2019) which showed that ethics for lower secondary school students had higher average scores in knowledge after training than before and the idea of Mahamarn, Viriyavejakul & Klinhom (2015) which found that students who studied for a higher vocational certificate at Chachoengsao Technical College exhibited high levels of ethical behavior in using social media. Furthermore, the above data is consistent with the research that found students studying in the first and fourth year of a bachelor's degree at the Faculty of Communication Arts, North Bangkok University had a high level of ethical behaviors using social media (Chanthakansakul, 2015). Specifically, this previous research mentioned many issues that include not disturbing the work of others, followed by not using a computer to infringe or hurt others, taking into account the impact that will occur on society caused by their own actions, not spying, editing or viewing information of others, not taking the work of others as their own, not infringing on the right to use a computer, respecting rules, regulations and etiquette when using computers, not using a computer to steal information, not using the system information to create false evidence, and infringing the copyrighted programs of others respectively (Chanthakansakul, 2015; Peuchthong et al, 2020). The study includes supporting the research findings on Phetchaburi Rajabhat University students having the highest level of overall social media ethics, and when considering the details, there were students who had the highest level of ethics in using social media. An ethical social media usage has the highest level in the following aspects: taking into account the impact that will occur on society which is caused by one's own actions, not using the computer for information theft, not using the computer to create false evidence, not disturbing the work of others, not using a computer to harm or infringe on others, respecting the rules, regulations and etiquette of using computers, and not taking the work of others as their own. The ethical level in using social media at a high level in three areas is non-infringement of the right to use a computer, not copying other people's copyright programs, and not snooping, editing or viewing other people's information (Prongmaneekul, Rakpanich & Wongsawangsiri, 2020).

In conclusion, these findings have provided a deeper insight into a phenomenon of social space formation in Thai youth. Specifically, there were two strategies that the Thai youth applied to create a social space on social media. The first one was relevant to posting or commenting about social injustice and individual issues (High level). This can be the power of the younger generation to enhance a social or political movements in the future. The second one was related to posting or commenting about race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, social class, and their own preferences (Low level). Furthermore, the empirical findings in this study provide a new understanding of catagories that represent their self-ethical identity on social media. The majority of students use social media ethically, however, some students jeopardize other people's privacy by using social media illegally.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Although this study has produced a body of knowledge on social space strategies and self-ethical identity development on social media, as well as a workshop manual for strengthening ethical abilities in the use of social media to lead Thai adolescents, it still has

significant limitations. First and foremost, the COVID-19 outbreak necessitated the collecting of data from the sample group for further study and data analysis, causing the production of this report to be delayed. Second, the participants in this study were Thai students from Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna in Chiang Mai. As a result, caution should be exercised when transferring the research findings to the study of Thai students in other places, as their character and personality will differ from the original sample group.

Practical Implications

Practical implications of this research are as follows: Firstly, psychologists and teachers can apply the findings of this study in teaching and learning so that the youth can gain knowledge, understanding, and being able to create a social space and their self-ethical identity on social media appropriately, taking into account the rights and freedoms of others and related laws. Secondly, these findings can be applied in counseling to encourage young people to express their identity on social media in an appropriate, creative, and ethical way. In addition, applying ethics in using social media and the social media manual for Thai youth, that was developed as a part of this study, can be used for developing their ethical skills in using social media. Thirdly, educational institutions can address the research findings in policy planning to prepare and support students to use their potential in developing their identity in social media and life. Finally, society has gained knowledge about the form of social space creation and self-ethical identity display in social media for Thai youths as well as gaining a better understanding of today's Thai youth identity development.

Theoretical Implications

This research has some theoretical consequences. The construction of social space and self-ethical identity on social media among Thai youth may differ from Thai adults, and research should be conducted on this issue among the working-age population in order to have a deeper understanding of the phenomena that occur in Thai adults. Moreover, there should be a research on factors influencing the construction of social space and self-ethical identity on social media among Thai youth.

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