Social media interconnection between people: Greta Thunberg's influence on the climate movement

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Abstract. The increasing rate of climate change has been staggering over the past couple of years. It causes a lot of changes in the earth's biosphere. The earth's temperature has been increasing in an unprecedented phase, causing the seawater to expand and ice over land to melt, both of which can cause a rise in sea level. Given this problematic issue, the world leaders somehow do not put enough action to tackle this. When world leaders are failing our future by not taking the climate change issue seriously, a young girl from Sweden named Greta Thunberg is about to set a global spark of global movement concerning global warming. Since she began to strike outside the Swedish parliament, she gained the public's attention, especially youth. This study aims to analyze how Greta Thunberg influences youth worldwide to take action against climate change using social media. This article uses social activism theory and Collaborative Internet Utilities to analyze the global phenomenon. This Journal uses qualitative research methodology. The data and relevant information are being analyzed to explain Greta's influence on global youth regarding climate change and its effects on global politics.

1. Introduction
Humans have run their activities throughout the centuries without any long-term environmental danger looming over them. But time has changed. Since the industrial revolution, human economic activity has significantly transformed. Humans began to use coal because it could increase the productivity rate, and in the end, more products produced equals more profit. This kind of pattern was then set as the benchmark for industrial moguls to establish their business empire. At this point, the world has entered a whole new level where economic activities worldwide use coal as the primary fuel source to power human economic activity.
With this rapid growth of economic activity, industrial sectors are becoming diversified, for example, automotive, telecommunication, agriculture, technology, pharmaceutical, etc. This has only one meaning that by the course of years, human necessities are also growing. The industrialist sees this opportunity to fulfill the market needs and, of course, to satisfy human needs. The increase of economic productivity run by humans is seemingly good for their prosperity because the human population has been swelling in these recent years. If there were no sufficient workplaces, there would be much unemployment. Therefore, economic-wise, it is good to have much industry to keep the human needs adequately.

But behind all of these industrial advantages, several downsides could affect the ecological aspects of the earth's ecosystem. Today, most industrial facilities still use non-renewable fuels such as oil, coal, and gas to run their operations [1]. This particular gas could create a greenhouse effect where the sun's light is trapped within the earth's lower atmosphere and ultimately cause the earth's temperature to rise significantly. Not only industrial factories that destroy the earth's atmosphere, but the emission gas released by cars and power plants that use coal also contributes to the worsening condition of the lower atmosphere. According to a study conducted by the University of Toronto, 25% of cars and trucks are causing about 90% of pollution from the vehicle fleet [2].

In response to those problems, a girl from Sweden named Greta Thunberg made her move by skipping school and protesting. Greta first caught the public's attention when she began her solitary school strike outside the Swedish Parliament building in Stockholm in 2018 [3]. Her first action was sitting in front of the Parliament for three weeks to get politician's engagement in tackling climate change. However, her strike does not seem to attract the politician's interest. On the other side, she gets the attention of many climate concerned organizations, groups, and individuals. After several times, the strikes for climate change are becoming even more famous, and many youths worldwide were inspired by Greta's protest and seek to do the same thing. Greta said in one of her speeches that Adults were not acting what they were supposed to do. The considerable involvement of people joining Greta’s cause occurred due to interconnection between people through social media and common concerns among youth regarding climate change. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how a single individual (Greta Thunberg) can affect public opinion throughout the world about climate movement using social media.

2. Methods

Using the qualitative descriptive method and utilizing the data record of Greta Thunberg's actions from social media (mainly Twitter), this article offers a perspective about how the youth use social media while protesting and what kind of reactions their protest generates from other members of society. Social media platforms are transforming political engagement by offering agency through the ability to voice political views. This research is important as the action on climate change requires a global response. Social media can fill a gap in institutional processes which are not currently designed to engage citizens in global policy decisions. Social media can be used to question, contest, and/or support decisions or actions of media, political, private, or governmental organizations related to the climate crisis. The global climate strike reflects a trend in international protest events connected through social media and other digital media tools.

2.1. Social activism

The act of social activism is a group of people who have a common goal and thus want to make several changes according to their belief when the social structure or the governmental system of society has become more ruined and no longer functioning in human life. Social activism is an instrument of socialization in society. It shows how people can organize themselves, protest, the degree of involvement in decisions and social life [4]. Social activism is needed, for example, when the political system of one's country is so corrupt and on the edge of collapse. Then, the people of that country are moved to change their country's political system hoping that the corrupt government could be replaced by the better one. In the end, this social activism's goal is to make several changes in their society so that the condition could be recovered and re-balance the situation to what's good according to the group.
of people who do the social activism. The contemporary example of social activism in this regard is the Arab Spring in the Middle Eastern countries. Arab Spring is a social movement done by the people of Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen to demonstrate and protest the repressive and authoritarian government in the respective countries. Such protests aim to make changes in society where they feel discontent about their government. Therefore, they make waves and waves of giant protests targeted at their government, hoping they could topple down the repressive government and replace a more democratic ruler. As the final result, some countries have changed into freer countries and make their citizens content. But Syria, as a result of this protest, was struck by a long and bloody conflict in which its people are becoming even more suffered.

According to Dumitraşcu [4], there are four types of social activism: (a) Demanding solutions to contemporary problems through the taking of oppositional stances to mainstream policies. These include short-term actions like strikes, protests, and demonstrations. (b) Undertaking activism manifests itself by creating alternatives to the dominant system through the construction of new ways of social behavior. (c) This type of activism seeks to create new alternatives within societies. We can talk about social centers, cooperatives of workers, etc. (d) Revolutionary activism is concerned with a fundamental change of society and its major institutions.

Social activism is not always done domestically. It also can be done internationally. According to Amherst [5], social activism is intentional to bring about social change. By looking through its definition, someone who fights and struggles for some societal changes can be called an activist. So social activism can be done anywhere, no matter what the scope is, whether domestic or international, as long an activist is active fighting, protesting, and demanding changes to its government to end the social injustice felt by the activist public in general. The social activism which is done internationally is, for example, the struggle to fight global warming. Global warming is relatively the most common issue where activists always work to fight/ What they are facing is a strong vested global system that makes the rate of global warming increase rapidly.

2.2. Collaborative internet utilities

Jonathan Stevens, in his Thesis "Webeaucracy: The Collaborative Revolution" was the first one who introduced the term Collaborative Internet Utilities. Stevens argues that the usage of the internet in modern society is very crucial to human life. It affects the human lifestyle and the political condition and can potentially change the governmental system through the internet [6]. In this modern era, internet connection produces many products that allow humans to connect through the internet, in this case, social media. Social media offers society a platform where they can express their feeling and emotions. Not just that, social media also offers people to express their concern about something crucial and thus post it on the internet so that the public can see and decide their opinion whether they agree or not towards someone's opinion who has posted their concerns. Taking from Steven's term, collaborative means working together to achieve a common goal. According to Cambridge Dictionary, collaboration is "Involving two or more people working together for a special purpose." Collaborative Internet Utilities is a term where an individual or a group of people expresses their concerns, thoughts, feelings, and interest through the internet about certain crucial things. It attracts the general public to express their reaction and opinions whether the public agrees about the topics that have been brought up. In the end, the public who agrees about the issue will do something and support the individual or the group to achieve their goals and interest.

The rapid use of social media in the past years has led to many environmental movements. People express their anxiety towards the ever-worsening condition of global warming on social media. What Greta Thunberg was doing in front of the Swedish parliament has attracted many supporters, it sparked online discussion, and many people are moved to follow her action. Many of these supporters then made their movement in their own countries, which Greta inspired. This international movement inspired by Greta creates an interconnection between them. They all have a common goal and are united by one mission: to reduce global warming threats.
3. Results and discussion
The supporting factor that boosts Greta's is social media. With many supporters worldwide joining Greta's effort in combating climate change, there is feedback given from the youth. Greta is addressing a message to the youth worldwide that they too must combat climate change for their own and global future. These events show that there is communication between Greta and the other youth across the globe. Within them, there is an interconnection between individuals through this Global warming Issue.

3.1. Greta against the adult
"Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them," said Antoine de Saint-Exupery in his renowned novel called The Little Prince. This Novel taught us those children have their own set of minds that adults never understand. Children always question what the adults did because the adult is very practical and materialistic oriented, and sometimes it confuses children. Greta Thunberg again repeats this phenomenon as she saw climate change worsen without any serious actions to stop it. Despite the United Nations Climate Change Conference results, Greta said in her speech that adults, the climate negotiators, are not mature enough to work together and prevent the worsening climate change. The conference itself emphasizes the agreement of 200 nations to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius over the pre-industrial level.

In her remark, she also said that the adults are sacrificing the biosphere for the opportunity of a very small number of people to continue making an enormous amount of money. The destruction left by the small number of people also affects the next generation's life. Greta accused the adults that they were stealing the next generation's life by letting the destruction of the earth keep on happening.

Based on this event, there was a conflict of interest held by the youth and the adults. The adults, which are the main actor in global politics, have their agenda. The world leaders wanted to make their national economic activity still running in a phase where their countries keep gaining income.

By doing a series of economic activities, countries also have rules that regulate the industry not to produce a lot of toxic waste as a by-product. On the other side, however, the youth demand the adults stop or decrease the rate of climate change sourced from the economic activity that undermines the earth's environment.

3.2. Anti-climate change global movement
The social media platform, especially Twitter, has provided much coverage about Greta Thunberg's strikes outside the Swedish parliament. 588,479 unique users generated a total of 1,744,446 tweets for 14 months (August 20, 2018 – October 31, 2019) that included the query "Greta Thunberg" [7]. One single coverage of her could be spread in a matter of minutes across Sweden or even the world.

The spread of information about Greta's strike is moving to a global trend while so many people can see and know what she is doing. Because of the nature of Twitter, a tweet from prominent users who have numerous followers could reach more users worldwide. For instance, Barrack Obama mentioned Greta Thunberg in his tweets and received 53,753 re-tweets and 351,716 likes [7]. Thus, the hype of this trend is being used by Greta as a medium of social activism. She uses social media to organize an even bigger strike across the globe. Therefore, people across countries would recognize that climate change is a defining global issue that needs to be taken seriously.

According to Postmes and Brunsting, internet activism has had the effect of causing increased collective action among people [8]. Therefore, the more people who join the cause, the higher the possibility that the concerns being brought up can be heard by the government of a country, world leaders, and politicians. The rapid movement done by the masses could attract so much attention that the politicians have to look at it. The consistency of the strikes can be one of the parameters that can measure the success rate of the activism goals. When people are consistent enough to do global climate strikes and talk about the danger of climate change, it shows the seriousness of the problem. Hence, people are more aware and eventually join the movement.
Such protest aims to follow Veronica Dumitrascu, a Romanian Academy Institute of Sociology researcher, said. It is to change society's current social structure, which is at the edge of collapse with the new system that can fix the problem. This kind of social activism is relatively new. That is because the activist uses social media as the source of information and movement.

3.3. Interconnection through social media
As mentioned before, Greta organizes her Anti-global warming movement on social media, especially Twitter. Her first post was intended to call the general public to join her action on December 14, 2018. The response was huge. Since her post was made public, many people agree with her and have the same vision to save the world from global warming. At United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018, several Polish students skipped school and attended the conference to support Greta. What they did were hold signs that said: "12 Years Left" [9]. The signs reference the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that stated the global climate target could become impossible in 12 years if there were no complete overhaul of the global energy system. The students were also singing a song that shows hope that they can stop global warming for their future.

Greta has called the public to join her act several times. But she tends to ask the students of the world. The reason is clear because these young people will eventually replace the adults in the future. If the youth do not make such movement, the earth they live in today will be destroyed and too dangerous for their health. Therefore, Greta made a big coverage about the danger of climate change to the world youth to join her to save the world. According to Jonathan Stevens' theory, the Collaborative Internet Utilities, Greta posts her concerns and thoughts on social media, hoping that everyone joins her action. As time goes by, her post gains attention from the public, especially the youth. The biggest outreach of her post is the youth because young people are dominating social media.

As the impact of this approach, the youth are starting to pay more attention to this issue. They create Fridays for Future movement to mark their action of skipping class every Friday and organize a strike. This creates international grassroots connectivity where youth around the world are connected with the movement of climate change.

Jonathan Stevens stated that the more people join the movement, the higher the chance the particular stakeholder will listen and give attention to the emerging movement [6]. If there is no response from the government, the movement will likely disrupt the countries condition and situation. Therefore, it would be wiser for the ruling leader to hear their demands to maintain stability. As for now, Greta's movement has been organized in more than 71 countries, and the number is still growing [10].

3.4. Critiques toward school strikes
Early debates about the Fridays for Future movement revolved around a disagreement about students' responsibility to the school and their right to voice their demands. Some politicians have expressed their critiques that stated the students should remain at school rather than strike for climate change. Politicians said that it would be better if the strike were held after school. Not just politicians, some of the school board whose students were striking against climate change also stated that they were disappointed because the students held the strike on a school day [11]. This type of criticism emerged in several places, such as Australia and Hong Kong.

The criticism later shifted to the accusation of it being too politicized. There is a growing concern that adults are using these school strikes for political purposes. Some argue that the children who protest the government is being used and exploited as their front line. Therefore, many officials suggest that students should remain in school and continue learning something new rather than conducting school strikes that possessed possibilities of several adults from particular political interests infiltrating the protest.

4. Conclusion
It should be taken into account that many scientific findings show that climate change is a defining issue that would determine the quality of our future. Despite various global agreements that bind countries to
handle the issue, many also see that the actions are more like jargon. A trigger of events deemed necessary to turn things straight in the course to create awareness towards climate change.

The well-known strike of Greta against climate is based on social media. Greta uses social media platforms, namely Twitter, to spread her concerns and thoughts about climate change. In return, there is a lot of feedback given to Greta. Most of the supporters are youth who are also concerned about the future of their generation. Greta called and asked the youth and anyone who concerned about global warming to join her strikes. Many youths in various cities and countries are joining her and held waves after weeks of school strikes every Friday to express their anxiousness. According to social activism theory and collaborative internet utilities, the more masses join a cause, the better the chance that the work or the issue brought up could be heard and noticed from a particular stakeholder so that their goals could be achieved soon. But seeing the good cause and goals aimed by Greta does not mean her action is unopposed. Many world politicians criticized the school strikes. One of the examples, Scott Morrison, Australian Prime Minister said that the students should remain in school and learn something new rather than protesting. He stated that students should stop the strikes and do less activism. Some also said that particular politicians are using the students to fulfill their agenda. That means it would be better if students did not carry out the protest anymore. Government officials also threatened those who joined the action, but Greta stated that the threats should be placed in a museum because it is no longer working and is old-fashioned.

It can be understood that interconnection between people can happen with a certain prior requirement. In Greta's case, it shows that people can be moved with the right influence and treatment. How social media also can affect the impact of a certain movement in a certain way also need to be examined. The waves of protest caused by the chain of events stimulated by Greta's action showed that people-to-people connectivity could even be influenced (or designed) by just emphasizing a certain issue that needs awareness. Social activism should not be taken lightly, as it can create a considerable impact that corresponds to a certain issue in the world.

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