

The Effect of Digital Literacy on Children's Mental Development

Supardi ¹, Salami Mahmud ^{1*}

¹ Ar-Raniry State Islamic University Banda Aceh

Article Info

Article history:

Received December 23, 2024

Revised December 27, 2024

Accepted December 28, 2024

Keywords:

influence, digital literacy, child and adolescent psychology

ABSTRACT

This research aims to explain the influence of poor literacy on children's mental development and in self-disclosure through social media. The object of this research is the comments posted on the social networking site Facebook with the focus of the problem of elementary school students who upload intimate photos on Facebook. The formulation of the problems in this study are (1) what are the types of comments on the uploads of elementary school students who upload their intimate photos in the form of Memes. (2) How is the psychological impact of children on these comments? The research method used is qualitative research. The types of comments that appear in the subject of this study are ingratiation, intimidation, and supplication. The psychological impact of these comments on children is the tendency of children and adolescents to get used to insulting others, causing an envious attitude towards others, causing depression, being carried away by the mood of negative comments, and getting used to speaking with impolite language.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.



Corresponding Author:

Salami Mahmud | Ar-Raniry State Islamic University Banda Aceh

Email: salami.mahmud@ar-raniry.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, obtaining information is very easy. Digital media makes it easy for every user to share information with each other, and information sources can come from anywhere. The digital era is inevitable. Anyone can easily utilize it well, but not infrequently it can also destroy someone. People's lack of understanding of digital media has led to misuse that results in personal and social life.

Social media comes as part of the development of the internet. Its presence offers an easy and new way of interacting, communicating, and socializing with the support of interesting features. The number of social media users in Indonesia is dominated by teenagers so that the impact is very much felt by teenagers. Good use can improve achievement, on the other hand, bad use can have negative consequences for children and adolescents (Retnowati, 2015: 314).

For example, currently there are many cases related to , humiliation, prostitution, kidnapping, *bullying* which can trigger depression in children. The ease of spreading information, both positive and negative, throughout the world and known by social media users makes children embarrassed, inferior, and scared. These phenomena show that internet users in Indonesia do not understand how to use the internet properly. On the one

hand, they can access the network, but they do not fully understand the consequences of using digital media. So, even though they have mastered reading and writing, internet users in Indonesia do not fully have digital literacy skills.

Based on research conducted by UNICEF and the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology in 2015, internet users in Indonesia from children are predicted to be around 30 million. Teenagers are born and grow up with social media as part of their lives and daily lives. They are now very dependent on social media. According to a social marketing agency, there were 72 million active social media users in 2015. The most popular social media is *Facebook* (Retnowati, 2015: 314-315).

Facebook social media is currently very popular with all levels of society. Even students at the elementary school level already have their own accounts. So easy access to surfing in cyberspace makes it difficult for parents to control their children's activities on social media. *On Facebook*, there are many communities, such as mountain climbing communities, writing communities, and even *meme comics* communities whose contents are quite entertaining. This *meme comic* account contains images (memes) and writings that are sometimes funny but have values to jolt readers to be more sensitive to social phenomena around them. Not infrequently, latest information obtained from the account.

Followers of *meme comis* accounts are mostly teenagers of junior high school and high school age. Regarding the psychology of children and adolescents, at that age, of course, readers have unstable emotions and are easily influenced. They do not hesitate to insult, say harsh words to show their disappointment and hatred for the news. This is the bad impact of digital literacy that occurs. The phenomenon of children who cannot control their emotions, swallowing the news without thinking whether the has an impact on them or not. A very high sense of curiosity that causes excessive hatred if someone reports something that is contrary to the prevailing values and norms.

For example, the news that recently broke out on social media is Awkarin with his impolite account statuses, his sometimes vulgar photos, videos that trivialize the national anthem, and elementary school boys who took intimate photos *on Facebook*. There are two characters in this case, Awkarin and the elementary school boy. Basically they want to present themselves by taking intimate photos, unnatural *Facebook* statuses. They do it on their respective personal accounts. No one is actually harmed. However, social media is a Photos, their statuses are shared on various accounts, one of which is the *meme comics* community account. Instantly, all members of the community hunted for Awkarin's account and the elementary school boy who was photographed intimately. Although it has been disguised, it is not difficult to find it. After that, the creative *meme comics* account admin began to create images that satirized Awkarin and the elementary school students who took intimate photo.

As a result, almost all members of the community share the information with the excuse of providing a deterrent and some may just be laughing at the stupidity of those who want to show their own ugliness. Not only that, the meme images created by members of the community are full of comments that corner Awkarin and the elementary school boy who took the intimate photo. Derogatory, insulting comments flooded the *meme comics* community account. In fact, the original account of the perpetrator was hunted down. Their *Facebook* account became a target of attention. Their accounts were filled with comments that essentially regretted their behavior, but in a way that sometimes hurt.

Issues related to digital literacy and children's mental development arise. The use of *Facebook* as a digital socialization medium is a way for people to fulfill their social needs. Children have a need to belong and be together in their social networks and relationships to actualize themselves (Tamburaka, 2013: 223). The need for self-

presentation is fulfilled by building a good view. *Facebook* social media really provides space for children and adolescents to show themselves to the public. On their *Facebook* accounts they present themselves by writing words of wisdom, criticizing, showing their strengths, conveying activities through videos, photos, and so on. Children and adolescents share with friends on social media. They share all their activities, photos, and statuses on *their facebook*. They interact through textual communication. They think that way they will be accepted. What happens instead is kidnapping, *bullying*, and fraud.

Therefore, digital literacy is needed in society, especially children and adolescents to filter information presented on social media. Digital literacy defined as the ability to understand, analyze, assess, organize, evaluate information using digital technology (Maulana, 2015: 3). Poor literacy can lead to psychological disorders in adolescents. This is caused by children's unstable emotions. They tend to accept information as a whole without finding out whether the information is true or a tweet on social media. The inability of children and adolescents to interpret digital literacy has an impact on children's attitudes and character. They are used to reading, commenting on information on social media. The comments vary. If the information is considered negative, they immediately write comments that are insulting, demeaning, and degrading. If the information is considered positive, they do not hesitate to share the information on their own accounts. This phenomenon is certainly not what is expected. Therefore, the best solution that must be done for children and adolescents is to provide digital literacy learning because sooner or later poor digital literacy will have an impact on the character and psychology of children and adolescents.

The purpose of this research is to explain the influence of poor digital literacy on the psychology of children and adolescents in self-disclosure through social media. Describing how children and adolescents respond to statuses on *Facebook*, photos shared by other accounts with a poor understanding of digital literacy which leads to problems with attitudes and behavior, even their psychology.

The benefits of this research are that *Facebook* users, especially children and adolescents, understand the importance of understanding digital literacy and its adverse effects on themselves. In addition, for parents to better supervise children as users of sociable media such as *Facebook*. The object of this research is the comments posted on the social networking site *Facebook* with the focus of the problem Awkarin and elementary school students who upload intimate photos *on Facebook*. The formulation of the problems in this study are: 1) what are the types of comments on Awkarin's upload and elementary school students who upload their intimate photos in the form of Memes, 2) how is the psychological impact of Awkarin and elementary school students who upload their intimate photos in the form of Memes? psychological impact of children and adolescents to Comments.

2. THEORETICAL

a. Literacy

Currently, the spread of information in the world is very fast. Sources of information can come from anywhere. Journalists write news and then share it through social media so that the distribution of information moves quickly. Not only news written by journalists, news and information written by ordinary people are often shared through social media such as *blogs*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and so on (Haryanto, 2014: 173). The response to news varies, of course there are those who support and vice versa.

So far, literacy has been understood as reading and writing. In the end, literacy is not only related to reading and writing. It includes the ability to read, understand and appreciate various forms of communication critically (Indriyana, 2016:1-2). In early development, literacy was defined as the ability to use language and images in rich and varied forms to read, write, listen, speak, view, present and think critically about ideas. Subsequent developments suggested that literacy was related to social situations and practices. Then, literacy was expanded by the development of information technology and multimedia. After that, literacy is seen as a social construction and never neutral (Abidin, 2015: 49-50).

Tamburaka (2013: 72) states that technological developments in the field of information technology have triggered major changes in digitization technology, namely the condition that all print and electronic media content can be combined and distributed. Gilster (in Maulana, 2015: 3) defines digital literacy as the ability to understand and use information in many formats from various sources when it is presented on a computer. Retnowati (2015: 314) argues that media literacy or digital literacy was developed as a tool to protect people from media exposure in order to have critical thinking skills and be able to express themselves and participate in the media.

Caniago (2013: 8) defines digital literacy as including an understanding of the web and search engines. Digital literacy can also be interpreted as a set of attitudes, understanding, in handling and communicating information and knowledge effectively in various media and formats. Bawden (in Caniago, 2013: 6) argues that digital literacy is the ability to relate to hypertextual information in the sense of computer-assisted sequential reading. In general, digital literacy is the ability to relate to hypertextual information in the sense of non-consequential or non-sequential computer-assisted reading.

Media literacy or digital literacy must develop the ability to develop the ability of audiences both intellectually, namely media literacy education in understanding typical media messages. Developing emotional abilities, feeling the things that self and others imagine from a message. Developing moral maturity in relation to the consequences of morality for everyone (Tamburaka, 2013: 13). Media literacy moves to see the bad effects that can be caused by media messages and learn to anticipate them (Tamburaka, 2013: 14).

b. Child Psychology

Jones (via Retnowati, 2015: 321-322) suggests the forms of children and adolescents presenting themselves to interpersonal situations on social media include *ingratiation*, *competence*, *intimidation*, *exemplification*, and *supplication*.

1) Ingratiation

The present form shows that social media users make comments or statuses on Facebook about things others like about them or a few negative things about themselves. It aims to express simplicity, familiarity, and humor. For example, appreciating other users' photos or exchanging statuses or comments.

2) Competence

This form shows that social media users are considered skilled and qualified. Some social media users with professions. For example, a political analyst will use his or her social media account to provide feedback on current political conditions. Of course it will strive to show its competence.

Likewise, social media that focus on artwork will try their best to display their best works on social media.

3) *Intimidation*

This form aims to gain power. Common characteristics are threats, expressions of anger, and possible displeasure. This form can be seen in the social media accounts of users who express their dislike or disagreement very expressively.

4) *Exemplification*

This form is used by social media users to be considered morally superior or to have higher moral standards. Common characteristics are ideological commitment or militancy, self-sacrifice, and self-discipline. Generally in the form of photos or images that are nationalistic and contain certain ideological elements.

5) *Supplication*

This form shows helplessness so that others will come help the person. The characteristics of the self-presentation approach include pleading for help and low self-esteem. Users sometimes write "what more trials to come", "I can't take it anymore", and several other posts that show they are helpless or in condition.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are three meme images shared on the meme comics community that are quite excited about Awkarin, and two images related to elementary school children taking intimate photos. The three meme images are titled: 1) In *the* words of this person, "Naughty can be, *stupid* can't". If you can *already* tell what's naughty and what's *not*, why would you choose to be naughty? *That's just* stupid. Image This picture was given 36,148 likes and 2,007 comments from community members. 2) "Bajuk lacks material, likes to *talk rudely*, smells of cigarette smoke, really not an ideal candidate for in-laws". This picture has a total of 31,876 likes and 2,366 comments. 3) "Nakalkokbangga, shame on those who *have* repented". This picture was given 24,312 likes and 1,213 comments.

There are two meme images related to intimate photos of elementary school children, namely: 1) An image that shares the *facebook* account and intimate photos of the elementary school children with the number of likes is 16,034 and 1,828 comments. 2) The second image is entitled, "Yaelahtong, shoes are still fitted with *nemak already stay withmeaja*", with 35,821 likes and 3,758 comments. Not only that, on Awkarin's original account and the elementary school boy there were also many attacks of comments both supporting and hating them. Comments that support Awkarin's attitude and the attitude of the elementary school boy will usually also be replied to by other accounts that do not like Awkarin and the elementary school boy. Eventually there is a comment war between supporters and non-supporters of Awkarin and the elementary school boy.

Most of comments on Awkarin and the elementary school boy who took an intimate photo show dislike, criticism, and even seem blasphemous. Not to the two of them, even their parents. This is because they are considered to be still within the age limit that parents should supervise, especially in cases that occur in these elementary school children. The following will present data related to comments about Awkarin and the elementary school boy who was photographed intimately by *Facebook* users.

In the comments found on the *meme* images, even some comments also exist on Awkarin's account and elementary school students, there are three types of interpersonal situations that are very prominent. These situations are related to the psychological development of children and adolescents in presenting themselves in public, in this case

in front of *Facebook* social media. The comments will show how children and adolescents respond to information related to their digital literacy skills.

The ingratiation situation shows how comments made in writing by *Facebook* users can attract the attention of other users. The comments given tend to be positive, showing good things, showing advantages, in order to be liked and liked. In the Awkarin case found 17 instances of comments (35.4%) and in the case of elementary school children, 5 (31.25%) comments were found. These selected comments are the ones that best show the situation of ingratiation among thousands of comments. For example, in the case of Awkarin, there is a comment, "all humans are not free from sin, he is so today, tomorrow we never know anymore maybe he will be even better than you blasphemers. Human life has its own storyline". From this sentence, it shows that the account owner is trying to be ordinary, it can even be said to be defending because most of them blaspheme Awkarin. Likewise with other accounts, "meri never bothered her parents. Karin *doesn't* work, but her business is more than all of you. College, get your own money. What are you? You're just begging your mom for money".

In the case of elementary school children, there is a situation of *ingratiation*, "Ssop bully, pity he is still a child. Fear later he will despair *and* then commit suicide. His name is also a child...". Then another account wrote, "Indonesia with the morals of some children is skewed. Let's together educate the good and right things to the nation's children...". Furthermore, "thanks to KPI, to parents who do not care about educating children, and thanks to Indonesian soap operas". The three comments show that the account owners are neutral, tending to defend because they think it is not only their fault, but there are other parties such as parents.

Then, there is the *intimidation* situation. This situation aims to show power by threatening, getting angry, and showing displeasure in an expressive way. In the Awkarin case there were 29 comments (60.4%) and the elementary school boy case 11 comments (68.75%). An example of a comment that shows intimidation towards Awkarin is, "only a bunch of idiots *bin sarap* take refuge in the words it's up to *me* and *I'm not a* hypocrite. Only *idiots* want to *follow* people. *Ultimategoblok*". Furthermore, similar comments were made such as following, "why *don't* you just take a sword and cut off your disgusting head!!!!". The two comments have shown their dislike and hatred for the behavior that Awkarin shows on social media. It even seems jealous that Awkarin still has many supporters who defend his attitude. Furthermore, in the case of elementary school children taking intimate photos, seen in the following comment, "the child *is made carelessly* whether outside of marriage or what. *Kagak* educated *beneram aortunya. Kagak cared about his association ...*". Then on another account, "What a sin! In these two comments, it can be seen that Facebook users do not like the photos and statuses shared by elementary school boy accounts who *take* intimate photos."

Finally, in the situation of *supplication* which contains the helplessness of social media users. In Awkarin's case, there are 2 comments (4.2%) that show Awkarin's helplessness, namely "you can insult me as much as you want, you are holy I am full of sin." The sentence is often uttered by Awkarin as a form of answer his haters. In the case of the elementary school boy, no similar comments were found.

The high level of 'bullying' by children and adolescents shows the judgmental attitude and character of *Facebook* users. They easily get carried away, provoked by negative statuses on *Facebook*. This can lead to depression, due to an excessive tendency towards social media. Everything is commented on, criticized and shared. This is of course related to the understanding of digital literacy which affects the psychology of children and adolescents. They easily insult, corner, even blaspheme, tend to demean others without

thinking in advance the impact of their behavior. This habit will damage children and adolescents. Being accustomed to commenting, criticizing, berating, saying harsh words on social media actually shows that their behavior and character are flawed. This will create a sense of addiction in children and adolescents that can have a negative impact on their psychology. Children and adolescents will be nervous about living their lives, afraid that their behavior will also be highlighted, then used as a laughing stock on social media.

These two cases show that a low understanding of digital literacy makes children and adolescents lose their identity. Statuses and photos presented on social media trigger people to comment and criticize their behavior. However, comments that contain criticism on the pretext of social sanctions are sometimes outrageous, even to point of insulting parents. This condition can interfere with the psychological development of children and adolescents. This will have an impact on their attitudes and behaviors that like to belittle, insult, and interfere in other people's affairs. In addition, in everyday life they will tend to be afraid to socialize 'as is' because they are used to meddling in other people's affairs, they will be afraid to behave. They assume others will scrutinize their attitudes, behaviors, and personal lives.

4. CONCLUSION

Digital literacy is a new era of development in the world of reading and writing. All information is easily obtained through social media. All news presented quickly, but sometimes inaccurately, because the speed of the news is the most important. Various news sites have sprung up, community accounts have sprung up, and so on. The point is to share information, both about others and oneself. This causes the curiosity of social media users, in this case *Facebook*, to increase.

Therefore, understanding the adverse effects of digital literacy needs to be emphasized to users, especially children and adolescents. This is because the biggest users of *Facebook* are children and teenagers. They use *Facebook* as a medium for self-actualization. Like two sides of a coin, the digital literacy era can improve the bad and also make things worse. The role of parents is very important in this case to supervise the behavior of children and adolescents. A poor understanding of digital literacy will affect the psychology of children who tend to insult others, cause an envious attitude towards others, lead to depression, get carried away with negative comments, and get used to speaking in disrespectful language.

5. REFERENCES

- Caniago, Junita Kahirani. 2013. Media Literacy and Digital Literacy. (Downloaded on the date of 15 October 2016, at 14.10 WIB)
<http://junitakhairanicaniago.weebly.com/-uploads/1/8-/4/6/18468290/makalahliterasimediadigital.pdf>
- Haryanto, Ignatius. 2014. *Journalism Era Digital*. Jakarta: Kompas.
- Indriyana, Hasta. (September 2016). *Encouraging the Creation of Independent Learners*. Paper presented in the National Seminar on Literacy Culture to Grow a Generation of Scholar and Literate, at the Faculty of Language and Arts, Yogyakarta State University.
- Maulana, Murad. 2015. Definition, Benefits, and Important Elements of Digital Literacy. (Downloaded on October 15, 2016, at 14.00 WIB)
<http://www.muradmaulana.com/-2015/12/definisi-manfaat-dan-elemen-important-literacy-digital.html>

Retnowati, Yuni. 2015. Urgency of Media Literacy for Teenagers as a Guide to Criticize Social Media. (Downloaded on 2 October 2016)

<http://akindo.ac.id/download.php?file=13Urgensi%20Literasi%20Media%20un.pdf>

Tamburaka, Apriadi. 2013. Media Literacy. Jakarta: PT Raja Grafindo Persada.

Triwikromo, Triyanto (October 6, 2016). *The Fate of Recent Indonesian Language and Literature*. Paper presented at the 2016 Sarasehan Kebahasaan dan Kesastraan, at the Language Center of Yogyakarta Special Region.