




## The Use of Social Media in Improving Literacy in Rural Village

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### Abstract

**Background:** Social media, in the form of chatting platforms such as WhatsApp and various other social media widely used by Generation Y today, can help to increase literacy and information dissemination in a rural village. With the involvement and contribution of Generation Y, social media has what it takes to improve literacy among people in rural areas, allowing them to obtain information as fast and as precisely as the urban communities do while also making advancements to the area itself.

**Objective:** This study attempts to investigate the use of social media in increasing literacy in eight villages on Madura Island.

**Method:** This study uses a descriptive analysis method with a qualitative approach.

**Results:** The results show that there are still several problems caused by the use of social media among generation Y in making decisions, taking action, behaving, communicating, and socializing. Another issue is that, generally, Generation Y tends to disseminate information directly without checking its veracity.

**Conclusion:** The lack of digital literacy worries many people because it causes the spread of disinformation that threatens the bond of kinship and disperses national unity. Therefore, there is a need for education on how to use social media healthily, provision of rural village and city-level libraries, and the need for attention from clerics, parents, and the government.

**Keywords:** literacy; rural village; social media

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## 1. Introduction

Social media provides solutions and significantly contributes to various aspects of life almost all over the world. Since its emergence in the late 1990s, social media has helped solve social problems by connecting humans with other humans worldwide (Jahan & Ahmed, 2012). Social media provides a broad reach for information distribution to the public (Innocent et al., 2021).

The use of social media increased when the Covid-19 pandemic began. Many people use it for entertainment during the lockdown and means of online learning activities (Asok, 2021; Reindrawati, Noviyanti, Raharja, 2021). The shift of almost all aspects of life to digital-based makes social media even more significant and needed amid such rapid technological developments. With social media, one can communicate within and between communities quickly and inexpensively.

Social media is a place for web-based online interactions to meet friends, chat, communicate, convey information, upload or download images, and so on. In line with this understanding, Ansari and Hasan (2016) define social media as the internet or mobile-based social space where people can connect, communicate, create, and share with others. Along with the development of technology, the pattern of socializing and communicating in the community has also shifted in using social media platforms (Innocent et al., 2021). Generally, people are encouraged to use social media because of demands from their surroundings. Some social media often found in Indonesia are WhatsApp, Instagram, Line, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and so on.

The massive use of social media is shown by the increase in internet and cell phone users. Akeriwa et al. (2015), who researched the use of mobile technology on social media based on library services in the educational development of the library study program at the university, stated that the majority of respondents, or 89% were active users of social media. In Indonesia, data from BPS (2020) showed that the number of cellular phone subscribers in Indonesia in 2020 reached 355,620,388 people, an increase of 4% from 341,277,549 people in 2019. This data was also supported by the number of Base Transceiver Station (BTS) towers which increased by 6.6% from 35,023 in 2019 to 37,522 towers spread throughout Indonesia. The available network facilities also saw improvements, where BTS towers with robust networks grew from 31,535 in 2019 to 34,595.

Cellular phone subscribers and internet users are Generation Y teenagers who tend to be more sensitive to digitalization and technological developments. BPS recorded that the number of people aged ten years and over who accessed the internet in the last three months of 2020 was dominated by students, with 70.18%. This figure increased from the previous year at 64.88%, followed by workers at 58.53%, others at 57.35%, and homemakers at 46.85%.

The growing use of social media also directly or indirectly impacts various aspects, including increased literacy, information search, and the ease of accessing relevant data and information.

Today, we can easily and quickly find various text forms such as typography, post-production, distribution, and reception using digital electronic media (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). The abundance of digital text makes the physical text less desirable. People can now read the news, see the weather forecast, find information, and socialize on a single screen.

Information itself without digitization is available in substantial, broad quantities and variations. It also has various aspects of quantity and quality. Martin & Madigan (2006) explained that one way to balance and overcome the amount and variety of information scattered in the community is through various digital platforms, including social media. They further argued that information sourced from the virtual world would not just sit out there but invade and attack the real world. Everything digital is subject to human nature, choice, understanding, and knowledge. Technology is only a tool and does not determine how a person thinks and acts. Thus, it is essential to adopt and apply different literacy uses and approaches (Martin & Madigan, 2006). Various perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes toward the information influence the public's high media consumption rate. Therefore, communication and visuals are also important aspects in increasing information.

However, social media also has its limits that hinder people from using it. Obi et al. (2019) identified the constraints of the use of social media as it needs more internet connection, especially in rural villages, lack of knowledge and skills in utilizing social media, lack of power or electricity in remote areas, lack of incentives, and technophobia. Similar things were also found by Uche & Udo-Anyanwu (2019), who stated that the lack of electricity and internet connection limits access to social media.

These obstacles generally arise in rural areas with inadequate infrastructure and supporting facilities: lack of internet connection, the absence of electricity and internet network facilities, and the public's lack of understanding of the internet and computer equipment. Therefore, information dissemination in rural areas is generally through word of mouth, from forum to forum, which can be attended by all villagers or those explicitly attended by women. Thus, the information that is distributed tends to be limited and takes a longer time.

The existence of social media in the form of chat platforms such as WhatsApp and various other social media currently widely used by Generation Y can help increase literacy and information dissemination in rural villages. Generation Y is the first generation that, from the beginning, has been introduced to and in direct contact with technology and digitalization (Bolton et al., 2013), making them more familiar with the usage. The use of social media, coupled with Generation Y's involvement and contribution, can improve literacy among people in rural villages, allowing them to obtain information as fast and as precisely as urban communities do and advance the area itself.

Based on the background of the problem, this study attempted to investigate the use of social media in increasing literacy in Madura Island. The opening of the Suramadu Bridge is achieved to stimulate the development of the island and consequently bring growth in the use of social media among its residents. The use of social media on Madura Island is problematic. On one hand the use of social media increases, but in another hand, the level of literacy in Madura is low (Surokim, 2017).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Social Media

Social media is a web-based information dissemination channel used by various professions to build social and professional relationships (Adetayo, 2021). It can also be defined as online tools that allow users to communicate with others in numerous ways to exchange information, opinions, knowledge, requests, hobbies, likes, and so on via the web (Ford & Ravansar, 2017). Coates et al. (2009) and Nalluri & Gaddam (2016) described social media as a mobile technology based on wireless devices that allow users to access information from various sources and communicate using voice calls, text messages, images, videos, and various other forms of virtual communication.

One of the main benefits of social media is that it can increase the speed of information reception and dissemination for research when compared to traditional tools like print media. Social media users can share information and ideas in virtual communities and connect with different individuals with the same interests, interests, and goals (Sharma & Shukla, 2016). The main advantage of social media is that it provides a broad community reach (Agyekum & Arthur, 2016; Akakandelwa, 2016). Generally, internet users can spend their time on social media daily (Baccarella et al., 2018; Barcelos et al., 2018).

Ngai et al. (2015) classified social media into six main activities, namely sharing sites, writing blogs, bookmarking social sites, online or virtual communities, social networking sites (SNS), and cyberspace. Mingle & Adams (2015) and Ogaji et al. (2017) found that the most used and preferred social media platform was WhatsApp, followed by Facebook and Twitter. Social media is also a means that attracts the attention of many people and is dominant and includes all communications that significantly affect behavior and engagement between individuals and communities (Ezeani & Ignesi, 2012).

Social media is a robust platform that can be used for various things, including learning activities and literacy improvement, information dissemination, and gathering (Islam & Habiba, 2015). Social media also provides an opportunity to take advantage of individual networks and present information in various formats, spaces, and sources so that the message conveyed is more solid and actual (Adetayo, 2021).

### 2.2. Literacy

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts.” (Montoya, 2018). It is, indeed, closely related to reading levels. Indonesia, in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2019, was

ranked 62nd of 70 countries in the category of national literacy level (Ministry of Home Affairs Library, 2021). This shows the low level of literacy in Indonesia.

Literacy is the depth of one's knowledge of a subject of science. The low literacy level in Indonesia is dominated by downstream or marginal or rural communities that tend to have a more inferior reading culture (Ministry of Home Affairs Library, 2021). Therefore, support from the upstream side is needed, including the government's active role in presenting efforts to increase literacy that follows the needs of the Indonesian people with various characteristics and cultures.

Each village has differences related to cultural origin, geography, natural resource potential, regional potential, and tourism that raise literacy levels that align with each region's cultural wisdom. One solution is to adjust the literacy improvement approach initiated by various levels of society, including teenagers.

Teenagers are currently classified as generation Y. This generation is often seen as the same as the millennial generation. However, generation Y and the millennial generation are two different generations. Generation Y is the first generation to spend all their time living in a digitalized environment from childhood to adolescence and pre-adulthood (Bolton et al., 2013). Information and digital technology greatly influence how they make decisions, act, behave, communicate, socialize, and generally affect them in life (Bennett et al., 2008; Wesner & Miller, 2008) with new digital habits. Prensky (2001) explained that generation Y could also be called a digital native who, since birth, has been treated and in direct contact with digital; they are not digital immigrants who move from everything analog and traditional to digital.

### 3. Method

This study used a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis methods and case study strategies. The qualitative approach answers the problem formulation with the central questions of why and how (Yin, 2015). It is based on the principles and values of subjectivity in assessing and measuring data and information. Data in a qualitative approach can be in the form of written sentences, speech, events, knowledge, or case studies that are descriptive or explanatory (Yin, 2015).

Descriptive analysis can explain a problem or phenomenon that is happening. Furthermore, these findings are investigated and analyzed more deeply to obtain analytical interpretation results (Leavy, 2017). Leavy (2017) also explained that descriptive analysis is not intended to test specific hypotheses empirically but to show an accurate picture of a variable, state, or condition.

The research location is in eight villages on Madura Island, namely Sukollilo Barat, Banyuajuh, Taddan, Prajan, Tanjung Kacok, Kebun Agung, and Prenduan. The reason for selecting those villages is that there has been considerable development of tourism and on the Island, as a consequence of the opening of the Suramadu Bridge, which may affect the growth of the use of social media among the villagers of Madura Island. To obtain primary data, the researcher interviewed 30 youth or generation Y aged 27 to 42. The aim was to interview until a reasonable level of saturation was reached. As there were no certain rules for the sample size in this qualitative approach (Leavy, 2017), the interviews for this research ended at the point of 'redundancy'. Similar responses from the interviewees indicate the point of redundancy had been reached. Generation Y was selected through a purposive sampling technique to obtain information about how the use of social media can help increase interest in reading and literacy among Villagers in Madura Island. The purposive sampling technique in taking the interview sample was chosen to obtain more focused, specific, and actual data.

### 4. Results

Based on the results of research in the field, the rural village community has mastered the technical skills in using the internet. However, they still need to fully comprehend media literacy skills in knowing and operating various internet functions such as using a browser, downloading, uploading files, and so on. This is in line with the idea of Philip Kotler and Kevin Keller (2012) that social media is a means for users to share text, images, video, and audio information. Social media can also be interpreted as an online tool that allows users to communicate with others in various ways to exchange information, opinions, knowledge, requests, hobbies, and likes, via the web. One of the aspects of media literacy measures the individual's ability to criticize all forms of internet content. In this case, the majority of the

rural village community still needs help to distinguish between credible and false sources of information, correct and incorrect information, and learn the regulations for disseminating information through the internet. However, if they receive broadcast information on social media, they tend to immediately participate in spreading the information without checking its veracity. The results of the study stated that the social media platforms are WhatsApp, Line, KakaoTalk, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube.

The above results are the same as what the interviewee stated:

"for now, the rural villagers' understanding of using internet features is limited on how to watch videos on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram because those apps were inbuilt into their smartphones."

This means that the informant of this research tends to only see social media as entertainment and body image only as entertainment. This phenomenon is similar to the research of Vandebosch et al. (2022), who stated that current trends in social media include a particular focus on different social media platforms, unique features for social media, and potentially positive body image content. First, it was found that visual platforms (e.g., Instagram) were more dysfunctional for body image than textual platforms (e.g., Facebook). Second, taking and editing (but not posting) selfies harms body image. Positive comments intensify the effect of idealized content exposure. Third, from the forms of potentially positive content studied in the latest research (namely fitspiration, disclaimer labels, and body positivity), only body positivity content positively affects body image.

Generation Y is a generation that lives in an era of open information from the internet, including the choice of online markets. Ys is a Cohort term in demographics. Currently, there are four significant demographic cohorts: Baby Boomers born in 1946-1964, Gen-X born in 1965-1980, then Millennials or generation Y born in 1981-2000. Finally, there is the so-called Gen Z generation who were born between the years 2001 to the present. However, some literature also states that generation Y combines generation Y and generation Z (Nugraha, 2018).

Generation Y is the main foundation for generating future leaders. Generation Y is bound to the characteristics of being connected, creative, and confident. Their leadership pattern prioritizes the interaction between general leadership patterns and their internet-based information technology (connected). The leadership pattern that is carried out also focuses on continuous creativity (creative). There are many patterns in solving problems. Situational approaches allow for the best solution. In addition, generation Y leaders have high confidence in dealing with various situations and problems (confidence). Generation Y is a highly agile person while still staying on the right track.

During this era of disruption, Generation Y must be able to take advantage of the various opportunities that exist. Technology can be developed for more significant benefits and open new jobs. Through gadget-based technology, it is possible to create creative designs, infographics, and video graphics that can be used to open the market for several products that are of interest to Generation Y. Several online-based applications can also be created to support various desired needs as an effort to optimize the marketing of business products that proclaimed by young people who want to create start-ups.

The selected villages in this research also seem to be lacking in digital literacy guidelines. This is shown by several informants who complained by saying "no rule", and "no guideline". The joint digital literacy movement and increasing national awareness are needed to anticipate the negative impact of inappropriate social media usage; it can also help build the character of Generation Y. However, some digital literacy efforts are only made partially without standard guidelines provided. Each ministry, institution, foundation, or particular community that organizes literacy tends only to provide the overview of media literacy campaigns for generation Y. There is no specific focus or perhaps some demands that can provide comprehensive education to generation Y on how to use social media professionally and proportionally.

In this case, it can be concluded that generation Y who are taking part in this research misuses social media. The lack of digital literacy causes a cut generation where the older generation is bypassed. In its development, they used social media only to communicate and socialize over only two platforms, Facebook and Instagram.

The internet can be used as a medium for communicating and sharing information in the community. Most respondents can communicate and disseminate information through the internet, but the content is still relatively simple and limited to exchanging news with friends. They have yet to use the internet to share more complex information.

The internet can have a positive or negative impact on its users. The impact of the internet on its users depends on how people uses the internet. Thus, in this study, it is essential to know the use of the internet by the respondents. The internet use in this study will be limited to the frequency of accessing the internet, duration of accessing the internet, media used to access the internet, and what content is accessed on the internet.

The community's use of cell phones was limited to accessing the internet as most people admit that they only use their cell phones to access the internet. As for accessed content, most are limited to online tools that allow users to communicate with other people in various ways to exchange information, opinions, knowledge, interests, hobbies, things they like, and so on via the web or social media and chat. The use of social media in the rural village community in making decisions, acting, behaving, communicating, and socializing tends to make users directly participate in disseminating the information without checking the truth of the information.

The above results are in line with what the interviewee stated:

"It is true that internet use in the rural village is already high because the pandemic has forced people to use the internet in every line of life. As a result of online learning or school from home, students' parents or guardians have to buy smartphones for learning media, especially nowadays cellphones have to use the internet to communicate with video calls via WhatsApp and no longer use cost-effective packages to make calls like they used to."

Another finding of this study is that although more older people (aged 65 years and over) are using social media, their level of use still lags behind that of younger age groups. Social media use has been observed to have several positive effects on the well-being of older people; however, different findings depend on the sample, size, and methodological approach. It highlights what is currently known about social media use and well-being among older people, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and argues that methodological and content-related research gaps must be closed before researchers can confirm a positive overall. Effects of social media use in everyday situations for older people.

According to Adiarsi et al. (2015), media literacy is the process of accessing and critically analyzing, and creating messages using media tools. Everyone has different levels of media literacy, depending on their ability to use, analyze and create content on the media. So, in the writer's opinion, literacy is the ability to read something not only in writing but how someone understands the rules, understands the era, and is not only good at reading high literacy but also has to understand the rules about what is being violated.

In the current discussion of people's behavior, several studies show that untrusted sources can also improve people's attitudes (Singh & Banerjee, 2018). According to research, trust is two different constructs with different meanings and conceptual features (Soh et al., 2009). The opportunity for one party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party (Hussain et al., 2020).

As will be revealed from the findings in this field, the role of teachers/clerics, parents, and the government is the most influential. These parties have a critical role in Madurese society. According to Risti (2011), in Indonesia, the role of kyai (clerics) and their pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) is not only related to Islamic teachings but also the power they represent for the students and the surrounding community. Current research reveals a high level of respect given to clerics and pesantren on the island of Madura.

The influence of clerics in the community also has a broader scope in Madura compared to other areas in Indonesia. This study confirms that the role of the clerics in Madura can include providing moral support to individuals, marital advice, first aid, and medical support for students and the community. A resource person from Prenduan Rural Village ep added that the clerics are very highly committed to being on stand-by 24/7 to help the community and their integrity. These aspects are the building blocks for the establishment of respect given to clerics by the villagers. The role of the clerics in Madura is vital.

Studies by Muthmainnah (1998) and Rozaki (2004) also emphasize the importance of the role of clerics in Madurese society. As Timothy (1999) also observes, Javanese cultural traditions in Indonesia require that obedience and respect be given to those in power and directly influence the way people interact. An example of the effect of this personal interaction: ignoring the rural village head as the first source of advice is an act that is considered offensive because it can embarrass the rural village head. There are parallels in Madurese society because the clerics should be approached first for advice because of the respect they instill in society, and after that, parents and government. The extent of their

responsibilities and the dependence of Madurese on clerics gives clerics power over the population. This power has contributed to the meaning of social media use and literacy in Madurese society.

Several interviewees in Prenduan Rural Village claimed they never go to the beach because their clerics forbid it. In this regard, clerics may contribute to the development of social media use among interviewees who perceived it as a threat to their religious and cultural values. Therefore, when teachers/clerics, parents, and the government have provided directions regarding social media issues in making decisions, acting, behaving, communicating, and socializing, the community will be more likely to obey those directions.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the results and discussion, the use of social media in increasing literacy in villages as the research site for this study still shows problems in the form of excessive usage among generation Y. While this study limits to the selected village in Madura Island, one of the most common phenomena regarding the use of social media is the emergence of various news on social media that cannot be validated. This is considered not only a form of hoax distribution but has also developed into an information virus and disease that can paralyze the mindset and behavior of Generation Y.

The lack of digital literacy worries many people because it causes the spread of disinformation that threatens the bond of kinship and disperses national unity. Therefore, there is a need for future research in researching how to use social media healthily, the provision of rural village and city-level libraries, and the need for attention from clerics, parents, and the government. Generation Y should be directed to a variety of more productive activities, such as developing online-based entrepreneurship, increasing their skills in e-commerce usage, and other creative activities that can foster the spirit and economy of the rural village. The community can also be introduced to Indonesia's unicorns in the creative industry and young entrepreneurs in the technology and its application business.

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