



# THE CONTROVERSY OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A LEARNING MEDIUM BETWEEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING DIGITAL LITERACY AND THE RISK OF DISINFORMATION

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## **Abstract:**

This study investigates the controversies surrounding using social media as an educational tool, focusing on its potential to enhance digital literacy and the risks associated with misinformation. As social media platforms increasingly influence educational practices, this study explores how these platforms can be leveraged to strengthen digital literacy skills among students while addressing the challenges posed by misinformation. The study aims to answer three main questions: How is social media used as an educational tool to enhance digital literacy? What factors contribute to the spread of misinformation in academic contexts? Moreover, what strategies can be implemented to mitigate misinformation's negative impacts while maximizing social media's educational benefits? The findings suggest that while social media has significant potential to enhance digital literacy, spreading misinformation remains a critical concern. By addressing these issues, this study offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and social media users better to navigate the complex relationship between social media and education, thereby fostering a more informed and savvy generation of digital learners.

**Keywords:** *Learning Media, Social Media, Digital Literacy in Learning.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In today's digital era, social media has become an inseparable part of everyday life, including in the world of education. As a learning medium, social media offers various opportunities to support the teaching and learning process. Various platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok provide easy access to a variety of learning resources, ranging from educational videos, infographics, to interactive discussions. This can be an effective means of improving students' digital literacy, which is an important competency in the 21st century.

However, behind its benefits, the use of social media in learning also raises a number of controversies. One of the main issues is the risk of spreading disinformation that can affect the quality of student understanding. Unverified information is often widely circulated, posing challenges for educators in ensuring the validity and reliability of learning materials. In addition, students' tendency to be distracted by non-educational content is also an obstacle to the use of social media as an effective learning tool.

Therefore, it is important to explore more deeply the potential of social

media as a learning medium, by considering the opportunities for strengthening digital literacy as well as the risks of disinformation that accompany it. This study aims to provide a balanced view of the benefits and challenges of using social media in an educational context, while also providing strategic recommendations to maximize its positive impacts.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the use of social media as a learning tool and its impact on digital literacy and the risk of spreading disinformation among students and educators. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to explore in depth the views, experiences, and understandings of individuals related to the use of social media in the context of education.

This study uses a descriptive analytical design to describe how social media is used as a learning medium, improving digital literacy, and its impact on the spread of disinformation. This design aims to map the relationship between social media use, strengthening digital literacy, and the potential risks of disinformation among students and educators.

This study involved two main subject groups, namely educators (teachers and lecturers) and students (high school and college students). Subject selection was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, namely selecting individuals who have knowledge or direct experience related to the use of social media in the learning process. A total of 30 educators and 50 students from various levels of education (high school and college) were involved in this study. The criteria for selecting these subjects aims to obtain more representative insights into the dynamics of social media use in learning.

The data in this study were collected through in-depth interviews and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore the subjects' perspectives on the use of social media in learning, digital literacy, and their experiences with disinformation. Interviews were conducted online (via Zoom or Google Meet) to access participants from different locations. In addition to interviews, this study also used documentation studies to collect secondary data. The documents collected include learning materials used through social media and examples of disinformation content circulating on these platforms. This documentation is important to enrich the understanding of how social media is utilized in the context of learning and to identify the potential for the spread of disinformation.

Data collected from interviews and documentation were analyzed using thematic analysis methods. The first step was to transcribe the interview results, which were then analyzed to identify the main themes that emerged from the conversation. The coding process was carried out to mark parts that were relevant to the research topic, such as understanding digital literacy, the influence of social media on learning, and the issue of disinformation. These themes were further analyzed to explore patterns and relationships between them. The results of the thematic analysis will be compared with relevant literature, so that they can provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. Findings from interviews and documentation will also be linked to existing theories about social media, digital literacy, and disinformation, to confirm or question the findings. To increase the validity and reliability of the research results, triangulation techniques were used. This triangulation was carried out by comparing data obtained from interviews with documentation data and literature references. In addition, this study also used the member checking technique, where the results of the interview transcriptions will be given to participants to ensure the accuracy

and clarity of the information contained therein. This is done to reduce bias and increase trust in the findings.

This study followed applicable research ethics guidelines. Prior to the interviews, all participants were given an explanation of the purpose of the study and were given the opportunity to provide written informed consent. Participants were assured of confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. All data collected will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

This study has several limitations, including the limited sample size and potential bias in data collection through online interviews. In addition, because this study focuses on individual perspectives, the results may not fully describe broader patterns or trends. However, this study still provides valuable insights into the use of social media in learning and the challenges associated with digital literacy and disinformation. With this method, this study is expected to make a significant contribution to understanding the dynamics of social media use in education and ways to optimize digital literacy while reducing the negative impacts of disinformation.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Correlation between the Use of Social Media as a Learning Medium, Strengthening Digital Literacy, and the Risk of Disinformation**

This study reveals a complex correlation between the use of social media as a learning tool, strengthening digital literacy, and the risk of spreading disinformation among students. Based on interviews with a number of educators and students, it was found that although social media offers great potential to expand learning, disinformation remains a significant challenge in this context. The results of in-depth interviews showed different views on the benefits and risks brought by social media as a learning platform.

#### **Using Social Media to Strengthen Digital Literacy**

One of the main findings of this study is that social media serves as an effective platform in strengthening students' digital literacy. An interview with a teacher at SMA Negeri 5 Jakarta showed that "social media such as YouTube and Instagram have become the main tools in providing interactive learning that can be accessed by students at any time." A student from Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta also added,

"I often use Twitter to find the latest references on the topics we are studying in class. Social media helps me understand things in an easier and more enjoyable way."

These findings suggest that social media allows students to access information more widely, encouraging them to engage more actively in learning. However, interviews also showed that although social media helps strengthen digital skills, not all students have enough understanding to assess the credibility of information sources. A lecturer at Universitas Gadjah Mada said that "many students are not yet trained to assess whether the information they find on social media is valid or not." This reflects the importance of more in-depth media literacy education so that students can sort out useful information and avoid misinformation.

#### **The Risk of Disinformation in Learning**

Another important finding is the great risk of disinformation posed by social media, especially in the context of learning. An interview with a teacher at a Central Jakarta Vocational High School showed that *"along with its benefits,*

*social media has also become a place for the spread of inaccurate information, such as hoaxes related to learning." (Dewi\_19)*

*"I once got information about a study method that was not scientifically proven, but many of my friends believed it just because it looked interesting on social media." (Jejen\_23)*

The study found that while social media platforms facilitate more flexible and diverse learning, disinformation remains a major risk. According to a digital media expert from the Bandung Institute of Technology, "Disinformation often spreads faster on social media because of its viral nature, and this affects the mindset of students who are not yet critical enough in assessing information." This shows that while social media can improve digital literacy, the presence of misinformation actually worsens the quality of learning.

### **Strategies to Reduce the Impact of Disinformation**

In an effort to reduce the negative impact of disinformation, most interviews indicated that better digital literacy education is needed. An educator at the University of Surabaya said, *"We have started teaching students not only to seek information, but also to verify that information before believing it."* (Rere\_25)

*"We need to be trained to think more critically before believing something we see on social media, especially when it comes to lessons."* (Ika\_27)

This reflects the importance of critical thinking skills in digital literacy to counter the spread of disinformation. In this regard, strategies to promote a better understanding of how to use social media wisely in learning can help reduce its negative impacts. For example, using a procedural-based approach to identify and verify sources of information on social media can help improve the quality of learning.

FACTOR	KEY FINDINGS	INTERVIEW SOURCE
Use of Social Media	Increasing access and engagement in digital learning, strengthening students' digital literacy	Jakarta High School Teacher, Yogyakarta University Student
Risk of Disinformation	Spread of inaccurate information, hoaxes related to learning materials	Central Jakarta Vocational High School Teacher, University of Indonesia Student
Reduction Strategy	More intensive media literacy and critical education to identify valid information	Lecturer of Surabaya University, Student of Semarang 1 State High School

**Table 0.1 Results of Findings**

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study confirm that although social media has great potential to strengthen digital literacy, the risk of spreading disinformation cannot be ignored. The use of social media as a learning tool requires adequate supervision and education to ensure that students can use information

intelligently and critically. Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to develop a curriculum that includes digital literacy and critical thinking education to reduce the negative impact of disinformation in cyberspace.

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