

Media Literacy In The Digital Era: Challenges And Strategies In Developing Critical Skills

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Abstract—Digital literacy is a form of ability to acquire, understand and using information originating from various sources in digital form. Literacy is a person's ability to use skills and potential in processing and understanding information when carrying out reading, writing, arithmetic and solving internal problems everyday life. Literacy itself in the educational context plays a role in developing a person's knowledge of a particular subject matter and encourage curiosity and develop your creativity. Currently, advances in digital technology are influencing human life, every individual needs to master that digital literacy is an important thing needed to be able to participate in the modern world. To get to a society that knowledge, critical thinking and reasoning, then literacy must be improved including these namely reading level, critical thinking and skills in using technology. Literacy movement The aim is to improve critical, creative and positive thinking skills use digital media in everyday life.

Keywords—Digital media, literacy, critical thinking

I. INTRODUCTION

Media literacy is an important skill in the current digital era, defined as the ability to access, spread, spread, and create media content while thinking critically about the message delivered (Mrisho & Dominic, 2023), (Hunt, 2023). This involves understanding the media impact on the community, recognizing the wrong information, and being able to navigate complex digital landscapes effectively (Probowati, 2023).

With the advent of social and communication media online, media literacy plays an important role in promoting responsible online behavior, encouraging respectful discussions, and increasing individual abilities to disseminate information critically online. In the world where false news and misrepresented information, media literacy empowers individuals to make decisions based on information, distinguish between reliable and unbelievable sources, and actively participate in the democratic process, which ultimately contributes to more informed and involved communities (O'g'li, 2023). In media literacy, there is knowledge about how the media works, how the media builds social meanings and how the media works in our daily lives. The aim is to educate the public to be able to use the media intelligently and critically. A media literacy then becomes someone who is able to read, understand, evaluate, select and criticize the contents of media messages. Media literacy is rarely heard because the effect can only be felt for a long time.

The reason, in the media literacy built is a way of thinking which certainly requires a long process. The discussion about the actual media literacy has long appeared. But it is still partial and difficult to touch the substance of the problem. Only certain circles do this such as campuses and civil society organizations with their elitist nature and fail to reach the wider community. This is a challenge of media literacy in the digital era.

Generation Z and Millennial are generations that grow large with technology and internet devices. As a digital natives (generation born during the digital era has been going on and growing rapidly), they accept social media as something that taken for granted (something used). This is different from the generation of their parents who are included in the digital immigrant category (generations born before the digital generation have not so developed).

Seeing this fact, it is certainly relevant to include media literacy in the educational curriculum and become part of the lessons they receive formally. It is not only based on the sensitivity of each individual. That way, since they are still studying in school, students are equipped with knowledge tools that are important for them, especially in accessing information on the internet. In other words, the focus of media literacy in the educational curriculum is to ensure that children are able to read technological developments including the consequences of the messages in them critically. And more importantly, use it wisely. Not only related to social conflicts, this is important as an effort to also ward off the symptoms of religious radicalization that is rampant using the medium of social media.

II. LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

The theory used in this study is New Media Theory. The theory of new media began to develop in the 1990s when there was a diffusion of digital media that moved rapidly in the field of information technology and telecommunications so that the review of media and communication became the object of new research. Studies on new media theory state that the condition of traditional media communication has shifted with technological innovations so that there has been a substantial transformation in the growth of communication using media. New media research has begun to emerge about globalization and media convergence, the internet has become an alternative media in presenting information without the technical constraints of the broadcast model. In new media, technology is developed in the form of digital code that can be connected and operated in all media platforms. Digital codes are the primary source of data storage and distribution for telecommunication activities. With digitalization, the internet will become the main source of information that is able to combine all media from newspapers, magazines, tabloids to radio, television, telephones and computers digitally.

In the digital era, individuals face various challenges in developing media literacy, including the emergence of stealth marketing, misinformation, and online polarization (Tari, 2022). The dominance of tech giants such as Google and Facebook in digital advertising revenue poses significant barriers, impacting the structure of the media industry and requiring media managers to be more literate than ever before (Papadimitriou & Valsamidou, 2022). In addition, the complexity of Big Data presents new challenges for literacy scholarship, the tension of the need for data fluency and critical literacy in the context of massive data collection and analysis (Boler et al., 2023). In addition, Millennials struggle to implement media literacy effectively, as they often encounter obscure information on social media platforms, highlighting the importance of improving media literacy education to address the spread of inaccurate information in the digital age (Tyner, 2020).

III. DISCUSSION

Media literacy in the digital era

In the increasingly advanced digital era, the ability to think critically is very important to face various challenges and changes that occur. Critical thinking allows us to make informed decisions, analyze information well, and solve problems effectively. In this article, we will discuss how important critical thinking is in the digital age and how through literacy we can hone these skills. Critical thinking in the digital era has its own challenges. In an online world, we are faced with a variety of information scattered on the internet. However, not all of this information is trustworthy or relevant. Therefore, the ability to sort, analyze, and evaluate information is very important. Through critical thinking, we can develop the ability to recognize facts from opinions, identify biases, and analyze arguments objectively. This allows us to make better decisions, guard ourselves against fraud, and have a deeper understanding of emerging issues. Literacy is the skill to understand and use information effectively. In the context of critical thinking, literacy plays a very important role. Through literacy, we can train critical thinking skills so that they become sharper and can be applied in daily life.

As technology advances, the need for critical thinking is increasing. In the digital age filled with information, we must be able to sort, filter, and analyze wisely in order to make the right decisions. Literacy plays an important role in honing our critical thinking skills. By reading various sources of information, applying critical analysis in drafting arguments, and discussing with others, we can develop critical thinking skills that are invaluable in this digital age.

Literacy challenges in the digital era

1. Lack of evaluation and critical skills Evaluation skills involve the ability to examine and assess sources of information, including identifying credible sources, evaluating the quality of information, and identifying signs of hoaxes or manipulation. (Parentah et al 2023) Critical skills involve the ability to analyze and question information with skepticism, recognize inconsistent or invalid arguments, and look at different perspectives to gain a more comprehensive understanding. (Raharjo & Winarko, 2021) In the context of literacy, critical thinking skills and evaluating are two sides of the same coin that cannot be separated from each other. Because according to Robert Ennis, a person's critical attitude is not enough just to be proficient in concluding or arguing, but the ability to evaluate a news/information (statement) is also very necessary (Kasdin, 2019). Lack of evaluation and critical skills refers to an individual's inability or weakness in analyzing, evaluating, and questioning the information received. This can include difficulties in identifying trustworthy sources, identifying biases or manipulations in information, and understanding the implications and consequences of that information. Lack of evaluation and critical skills can lead to individuals being vulnerable to the spread of inaccurate information, superficial understanding of information, and making inappropriate decisions. This can happen due to several things, including:

a. Lack of media and information literacy educators

The lack of education that focuses on developing evaluation and critical skills in dealing with information is one of the main causes of this shortage. If individuals are not taught how to critically analyze and evaluate information, they may be less likely to receive information without questioning its truthfulness.

b. Fluctuations in information sources

In the digital age of information abound, individuals are often exposed to a variety of sources of information that vary in quality and truth. This can confuse individuals and make it difficult to distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy sources.

c. Polarity of information

Information obtained through social media or news channels is often influenced by certain biases or views. This can lead to individuals getting caught up in an information bubble or a group that only consumes and trusts information that suits their own views. As a result, they are less trained in questioning and analyzing different points of view.

d. Distrust of authority

Some individuals may have a distrust of authority, including traditional media or educational institutions. This can reduce their motivation to critically evaluate the information received.

2. Digital inequality

According to Warschauer, as quoted by Rahayu et al. explained that inequality or the digital divide is a different ability to access, adapt, and create knowledge through the use of technology. Not all individuals or communities have the same access to technological devices and reliable internet connections. This inequality can result in gaps in access to digital literacy resources and learning opportunities. Many individuals, especially those less skilled in digital literacy, may face difficulties in accessing, interpreting, and utilizing digital information effectively. There are several causes of digital inequality in the community, including:

a. Infrastructure accessibility

Digital inequality can be caused by inequalities in access to technological infrastructure, such as uneven internet networks, the availability of hardware (e.g. computers, smartphones), and limited connectivity in certain areas.

b. Economic factors

Another thing that also has a role in digital inequality. Individuals or groups with low income levels may not be able to afford hardware or pay expensive internet subscription fees. This results in a gap in access to digital technology.

c. Lack of digital skills

Digital inequality can also be caused by an individual's inability and lack of skills in using digital technology. People who do not have access to adequate education or training in the field of technology tend to be left behind in utilizing and understanding digital technology.

d. Demographic factors

Some groups or individuals with certain demographic characteristics, such as advanced age, disability, or low social status, may have difficulty accessing or using digital technology. This could lead to greater digital inequality among these groups.

e. Limitations of relevant and useful content

Digital inequality can also be related to the limitations of digital content that is relevant and beneficial to certain groups or individuals. Content that does not match the language, culture, or local needs can lead to a gap in the benefits derived from digital technology.

f. Gender inequality

Digital inequality can also occur between genders, with women tending to experience limited access and a lack of digital skills compared to men. Associated social, cultural, and gender role factors can influence this gap. In the context of women, low education leads to inadequate digital literacy skills and their perception of the internet. Reducing digital inequality requires collaborative efforts from governments, educational institutions, the private sector, and society as a whole. This includes the development of broader and accessible infrastructure, training and education programs to improve digital skills, the provision of relevant and useful content, and policies focused on digital inclusion and reducing existing gaps.

Strategies to Overcome Literacy Challenges in the Digital Era

Strategies to address literacy challenges in the digital age involve a holistic approach to promoting effective and responsible literacy in the midst of technological change. Individuals can improve their media literacy through a variety of strategies. First, they can engage in educational movements that empower them to be informed consumers and entertainers, allowing them to make judgments about the media they encounter (Rozendaal, 2022). Additionally, individuals must develop critical thinking skills to distinguish between accurate information and widgets, especially in the era of fake news and misinformation (Lee, 2022). Additionally, considering the source, hosting platform, and date of publication of the news can help individuals determine their credibility and accuracy, as suggested by the Media Literacy Council (Zhang & Ye, 2022). By actively participating in media literacy classes, understanding the responsibilities of media consumers, and developing critical thinking skills, individuals can navigate the media landscape with more effective information and make decisions based on the content they follow. There are several efforts that can be made to overcome literacy challenges in the digital era, including:

1. Development of information literacy skills

Information literacy ability, also known as information literacy or digital information literacy, refers to an individual's ability to access, evaluate, use, and contribute to information in an effective and responsible manner. Information literacy skills are very important in the digital era which is full of abundant and diverse information. A person who has the ability to be information literate will be able to solve a problem and communicate his thoughts well.

2. Digital ethics education

Digital ethics education refers to efforts to teach values, principles, and responsible behaviors in the use of digital technology. The purpose of digital ethics education is to equip individuals with an understanding of the moral and ethical consequences associated with the use of digital technology, as well as to provide appropriate guidelines in dealing with the ethical challenges that arise in the digital world. Digital ethics is understood as the ability possessed by a person to be aware, set an example, adapt, consider and develop digital ethical governance in daily life. According to the Director General of Aptika, digital ethics is one of the four pillars of literacy which is interpreted as the ability to realize, consider and develop digital governance (netiquette) in daily life. The form of digital ethics and its relation to literacy in the digital era is very relevant and important.

The Role of Social Media in Shaping Media Literacy to Be More Critical

Social media plays an important role in shaping media literacy by disseminating information and creating awareness among users (Shahid, et al 2022). It serves as a platform for sharing content that influences public perception, highlighting the importance of media literacy in recognizing the purpose of media information (Baltezarević, 2022). Through social media, users can learn to be more critical by mastering knowledge and competencies, which has a positive impact on critical thinking and acceptance of cultural diversity (Kyrpa, 2022). In addition, social media can be used as a tool to shape literacy media, especially in critical moments such as martial law, emphasizing the need for the dissemination of verified and needed information (Cho et al., 2024). To critically improve digital literacy, users must focus on action, affinity, and influence, considering how they engage with online content, social relationships, and emotional responses to digital media (Jones, 2022). By understanding these aspects, users can navigate social media platforms more effectively and critically disseminate the content they encounter.

Increasing the Critical Moral Targeting of Children and Adolescents in Front of the Media

Teaching children and adolescents to become critical consumers of media from an early age (Durgevska-Georgieva et al., 2023) is crucial in today's digital age. Including a media literacy program in the school curriculum, as discussed in , can help develop critical thinking skills. These programs can focus on exploring and analyzing media content, such as gender representation on platforms like YouTube, as discussed in (Cannon, 2023). Understanding the vulnerability of children and adolescents to marketing tactics due to the poorly developed executive function, as mentioned in (Scharrer et al., 2023), can also guide educators in teaching them to make wise consumption choices. In addition, fostering the ability to critically interact with the media, as emphasized in (Stephens, 2023), is essential to prepare children and adolescents to navigate the complex media landscape in which they are immersed, promoting responsible and informed media consumption habits from an early age.

IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the article is that literacy, especially digital literacy, has a crucial role in facing the current era of technology and information.(Cahyani et al., 2024) Critical thinking skills are very important in the context of media literacy in the digital era due to the increasing flow of fake news and the influence of digital media technology on various aspects of life (Mrisho & Dominic, 2023). Media literacy skills, including critical thinking, enable individuals to channel sources of information, interpret news, and make independent choices, are important in today's mass-mediated society (Malchukova, 2023). In addition, critical media literacy expands the idea of literacy to include different types of text, empowering students to analyze and analyze the power of different forms of media, such as video, music, social media, and print, in representing social and environmental issues (Share & McBride, 2022). In addition, a study on critical thinking in stress fraction learning the importance of critical thinking skills in problem-solving and decision-making, highlights the role of teachers in fostering these skills through innovative teaching methods (Farida et al., 2022). Furthermore, research on digital storytelling formats shows that certain designs, such as intermediate formats, can effectively trigger critical thinking in individuals, the pressure of digital media impacting critical thinking skills. As a responsible citizen, a broader understanding of access, analysis, critical evaluation and content creation is needed that leads to the development of new media. It takes users who consciously carry out selection, recognize and respond and also participate as part of smart, creative and productive citizens in the media.

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