Social media wise education: Improving the digital literacy of vocational school students through Instagram

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant changes in the education system, including in Indonesia, with the implementation of online learning. This condition has encouraged an increase in internet and social media use among teenagers. Student activities on social media, especially Instagram, have increased significantly, but have not been balanced with adequate digital literacy skills. This Community Service activity aims to provide education to students of SMK Islamiyah Serua Ciputat about the wise and responsible use of social media, as well as encourage the involvement of teachers and parents in the online mentoring process. The implementation method includes initial observation, interactive counselling, positive Instagram content visualisation training, and practical assistance involving lecturers, teachers, and students. The results of the activity showed that students experienced an increase in understanding related to social media ethics, skills in creating positive content, and awareness of the importance of critical thinking before sharing information on social media. Additionally, teachers and school staff play an active role in supervising student activities both during and after the event. This program is expected to be the first step in forming a smart, critical, and responsible digital generation on social media.

Keywords: Visualization, Social Media, Instagram

Abstrak

Pandemi COVID-19 telah menyebabkan perubahan signifikan dalam sistem pendidikan, termasuk di Indonesia, dengan penerapan pembelajaran daring. Kondisi ini telah mendorong peningkatan penggunaan internet dan media sosial di kalangan remaja. Aktivitas siswa di media sosial, terutama Instagram, telah meningkat secara signifikan, namun belum diimbangi dengan keterampilan literasi digital yang memadai. Kegiatan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (PkM) ini bertujuan untuk memberikan pendidikan kepada siswa SMK Islamiyah Serua Ciputat tentang penggunaan media sosial yang bijak dan bertanggung jawab, serta mendorong keterlibatan guru dan orang tua dalam proses bimbingan online. Metode implementasi meliputi observasi awal, konseling interaktif, pelatihan visualisasi konten Instagram yang positif, dan bantuan praktis yang melibatkan dosen, guru, dan siswa. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengalami peningkatan pemahaman terkait etika media sosial, keterampilan dalam menciptakan konten positif, dan kesadaran akan pentingnya berpikir kritis sebelum membagikan informasi di media sosial. Selain itu, guru dan staf sekolah berperan aktif dalam mengawasi aktivitas siswa baik selama maupun setelah acara. Program ini diharapkan menjadi langkah awal dalam membentuk generasi digital yang cerdas, kritis, dan bertanggung jawab di media sosial.

Keywords: Visualization, Social Media, Instagram

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic, which affected the world, including Indonesia, had a significant and widespread impact on various sectors, such as education, health, and the economy. The pandemic has caused major disruptions in the global education system, with more than 1.5 billion students forced to learn from home. In an effort to overcome the spread of the virus, the Indonesian government has taken strategic steps, one of which is to limit people's mobility. These restrictions include the implementation of distance or online learning systems, which are the main alternative to maintain the continuity of education in the midst of an uncertain situation (Universitas Negeri Malang, 2020). This online learning process is highly dependent on the use of information and communication technology, especially the internet, as a substitute for face-to-face learning in the classroom.

These changes have encouraged many teens to adapt to the digital world, which in turn has increased social media use among them. Adolescents' activities on social media have experienced a significant spike, which has both positive and negative impacts. On the one hand, social media can serve as a means to interact, share information, and develop creativity (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). However, on the other hand, poorly managed use of social media can result in negative impacts, such as the spread of misinformation, cyberbullying, and decreased mental health (Twenge et al., 2018).

The impact of the use of social media requires the active role of adults, especially parents and teachers, to supervise adolescents' online activities. Parents are expected to be able to monitor and guide their children's use of the internet, while teachers have the responsibility to provide understanding and education regarding the wise use of social media (Livingstone et al., 2011). This is important so that adolescents can use social media responsibly and critically.

Social media, as an internet-based platform, allows social interaction between users with various functions, including communication, information delivery, promotion of programs or products, as well as a learning medium (Suryani, 2017). Instagram, one of the most popular social media platforms among teens today, allows users to create profiles, make connections, and share visual content such as photos and videos. However, not all information available on social media is worth consuming without critical analysis. Therefore, it is important for adolescents to be given adequate understanding so as not to absorb raw information from social media, especially Instagram (Rahmatulloh et al., 2024).

Based on the observations made, many students have not been able to filter content on Instagram wisely. This phenomenon shows the need for educational interventions that can help students develop digital literacy skills (Nasrullah et al., 2017). Therefore, this service activity aims to provide education and increase students' understanding in responding to content on Instagram. This education is also intended for teachers and parents to be more active in monitoring and accompanying the use of social media by students, so that they can utilize technology in a positive and constructive way.

Social media is a platform in the form of a site or application that uses internet-based technology (Setiawan & Setyohadi, 2017). This technology allows users to interact with each other, both with people they already know and with previously unknown individuals. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is a tool that allows users to create, share, and exchange information and content in virtual communities. Since social media can connect anyone, it's important for users to maintain ethics when using it (Mauludin, 2017). For example, by not triggering conflicts, avoiding inappropriate comments, and not overbehaving towards an issue on social media (Bennett & Segerberg, 2011).

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the use of social media has increased drastically among the public, including students or teenagers. This is due to the implementation of distance learning (online) which requires the use of the internet. According to the Pew Research Center (2018), about 95% of teens in the United States have access to a smartphone, and 45% of them say that they are almost always online. This condition makes teenagers more freely accessing social media, sometimes under the pretext of doing schoolwork, so that supervision from parents is reduced.

However, adults such as parents, teachers, and the general public still have a responsibility to monitor adolescent activities, both in the real world and in the digital space. This is important because social media has many impacts, both positive and negative. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and others are very accessible to teenagers. According to O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011), poorly managed use of social media can result in problems such as cyberbullying, the spread of misinformation, and negative impacts on mental health.

Without proper supervision, teenagers can fall into the negative impact of social media. One common mistake that often occurs is when they misinterpret content—whether in the form of text or images—which is then redistributed or even imitated. Mistakes in understanding and visualizing an upload can have serious consequences (Frison & Eggermont, 2016).

Instagram is one of the popular social media and is widely used by various people today. Based on data from Digital Transformation World in 2019, Instagram occupies the fifth position as the social media platform with the largest number of users in the world (Ahmad, 2019). The Instagram application is relatively simple because its main focus is to display images and videos of a certain duration, as well as providing features to write and comment, both for account managers and their followers (Satyadewi et al., 2017)

2. Community development method

This Community Service activity was carried out at SMK Islamiyah Serua Ciputat, South Tangerang. The main target of education is students, on the grounds that they undergo an online learning process. This condition encourages the increase in the use of social media in line with the high access to the internet. Therefore, educational

efforts and supervision are needed in the use of the internet, especially social media, by students.

This activity uses an educational-participatory approach, where participants are not only objects, but also actively involved in the counseling process. The method used is applied research in the form of Participatory Action Research (PAR), which aims to solve practical problems through collaboration between lecturers, teachers, and students. The implementation of the activity was carried out by lecturers of the Economics Education Study Program, FKIP University of Pamulang as part of the implementation of the Tridharma of Higher Education.

The stages of the activity consist of: (1) initial observation to identify the needs and patterns of social media use by students, (2) planning educational interventions in the form of the preparation of counseling materials on ethics and digital literacy, (3) the implementation of educational activities through interactive lectures, demonstrations, responsible Instagram content visualization training, and group discussions, and (4) reflection and evaluation through direct observation and responses from participants to know the effectiveness of the program. Data collection instruments include observation sheets, documentation, and simple questionnaires. This activity is then documented in the form of a report and used as a basis for evaluating the impact of the activity, with the hope that it can provide real benefits and sustainability for the residents of SMK Islamiyah Serua Ciputat, South Tangerang.

3. Results community development

Initial Observations

The service team conducted initial observations at SMK Islamiyah Serua Ciputat to identify problems and needs of students related to the use of social media. The results of the observation show that the majority of students use Instagram every day, but do not have an adequate understanding of digital ethics and the potential risks of using social media inwisely.

Educational Intervention Planning

1. Educational Material Counseling
   The counseling session focused on educating participants about three key areas: (1) ethics in the use of social media, including the importance of not spreading hoaxes and avoiding content that violates social norms; (2) the risks associated with visualizing and sharing content without a proper understanding, such as the dissemination of misinterpreted images; and (3) the importance of developing critical thinking and digital empathy before sharing any content online. This counseling was delivered by lecturers of the Economics Education Study Program FKIP University of Pamulang using interactive presentations, short videos, and case studies.

2. Practical Training: Instagram Content Visualization
   After receiving the material, students are divided into several small groups. Each group was tasked with creating one Instagram content that contained a positive

message, such as an anti-bullying campaign, a call to maintain school cleanliness, or an educational message about social media ethics. In this process, students are accompanied by teachers and lecturers to choose images, design captions, and adjust to the ethical values that have been learned. This training emphasizes the importance of visual literacy (the ability to understand and create responsible visual content).

3. Education for Teachers and School Staff
   a. The educational points emphasized during the session included: not posting content carelessly, maintaining digital ethics, avoiding hasty interpretation of content without proper understanding, filtering followed accounts, and developing an alert and critical attitude toward information.
   b. The main objective so that teachers/staff can accompany and supervise students on an ongoing basis

Figure 1. Educational Intervention Planning

Implementation of Educational Activities
The implementation of educational activities consisted of: counseling to students by a team of lecturers with interactive methods; educational Instagram content creation training by students in groups; discussion and reflection, where the work of each group is presented in front of other participants. This session was interspersed with open discussions and reflections on which content is the most inspiring, the reason for choosing images, and the potential impact of the upload on the audience; and supporting teachers and lecturers in the entire activity process

Reflection and Evaluation:
Some of the things achieved in the implementation of community service are as follows:
1. Increased understanding of digital ethics
   From the results of oral evaluation and direct observation during the activity, it can be seen that students are able to re-explain ethical principles in using social media, such as the importance of respecting the privacy of others, not spreading negative content, and thinking before sharing information.

2. Content visualization capabilities are improved
    Students demonstrate the ability to design Instagram content that educates and inspires. Some students even show high creativity by creating digital illustrations or taking photos directly in the school environment to support the message they want to convey.

3. Involvement of teachers and school staff
    Teachers and school staff actively participated during the activity and expressed their commitment to continue supervision of students' digital activities. They also received simple digital education modules from a team of lecturers to be used in future student development activities.

4. Reflective awareness among students
    In the reflection session, many students said that they had not previously realized the impact of personal or provocative uploads. This activity triggers awareness to be more responsible in using social media.

5. Follow-up plan
    Some students expressed interest in developing an educational-themed Instagram account that contains motivational content, learning tips, and social campaigns. This shows that service activities are not only informative, but also transformative.

Figure 2. Implementation of Service Activities

Some important things that need to be considered to avoid the negative impact of visualization on social media include:

1. Make it a habit when sharing content in the form of text, images, or videos so that you can inspire and motivate others who see or read it. This can be a sign that you are a thoughtful person on social media.
2. The habit of writing sarcasm about other people who are involved in problems with you actually shows your inability to solve the problem and can even make things worse.

3. Freedom to express opinions on social media does not mean that your entire personal life should be made public. Choose which information is worth knowing and which is better kept for personal consumption.
4. Uploading content that contains taunts, anger, or provocation can offend certain parties and negatively impact social relationships, both online and in the real world. Misunderstandings often occur due to impolite and disrespectful ways of conveying.
5. Be careful when posting check-in locations, as this can invite the risk of crime. Consider your personal and family circumstances before sharing information about your whereabouts.
6. Avoid containing words or content that contain elements of SARA, pornography, and violence according to applicable norms and values, because it can cause misperception and bad impacts.
7. Pay close attention to the personal information you include on your social media accounts. Not all data should be disclosed, limit only what is necessary to maintain personal security.
8. Give opinions on social media supported by valid data and facts so as not to cause misunderstandings or the spread of wrong information.
9. Be selective in choosing personal content to share on social media. Photos or videos that are highly personal should be reconsidered for publication.
10. When resharing news, make sure you've done a fact-checking so that you don't spread misinformation and become the laughing stock of others.
11. Remember that your life doesn't just take place in the virtual world of social media, but also in the real world.

The education delivered is related to how to use social media wisely, which includes not being careless in posting content, maintaining ethics in interacting on social media, not directly interpreting other people's posts without a clear understanding, always being vigilant and not easily believing every post encountered, and wisely selecting and filtering the accounts that are followed.

This education is given to teachers and school staff so that they can supervise student activities when using social media on the internet. In training, students carry out all instructions with assistance from teachers and lecturers who teach the material. The ultimate goal is for educators, students, and school staff to apply and apply these principles consistently in the school environment, under the supervision of the Pamulang University Lecturer Community Service Team.

The spread of Covid-19 has an impact on various aspects of life, including the education sector. During the pandemic, the learning process was carried out online which required the use of the internet. As a result, students automatically use devices such as mobile phones or laptops to follow learning. This has also led to an increase in the intensity of social media use, especially Instagram. This condition makes it easier for students to access social media without supervision from parents. Therefore, the role of teachers and parents is very important in monitoring student activities when using the internet. Through this counseling activity, students are given education about the wise use of social media, especially Instagram. Thus, this community service

activity has made a real contribution in building wise digital awareness, especially for students as active users of social media. The combination of counseling methods and practical training has proven effective in improving students' understanding and skills in visualizing social media content ethically and responsibly.

4. Conclusion

The Community Service activity carried out at SMK Islamiyah Serua Ciputat succeeded in providing education and training to students related to the use of social media, especially Instagram, wisely and responsibly. Based on the results of the implementation of the activity, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the importance of digital literacy for adolescents is evident. The increasingly intensive use of social media among teenagers, especially since the shift to online learning, requires strengthened digital literacy so that students are able to filter information, understand communication ethics, and avoid spreading negative content or miss information. Second, the applied counseling and training methods have proven effective in enhancing student understanding. Through an educational-participatory approach involving material delivery, group-based Instagram content creation, and reflective discussion sessions, students demonstrated improved comprehension and skills in producing ethical, inspiring, and responsible digital content.

Third, the active role of teachers and lecturers is crucial in fostering digital ethics. Their involvement not only ensured the smooth execution of the activities but also contributed to shaping students' attitudes in managing their digital behavior, both within and beyond the school environment. Finally, the activity successfully awakened students' awareness and creativity. Students became more conscious of the importance of thinking critically before sharing content on social media and displayed creativity in conveying positive messages through visual content—an essential first step toward building constructive digital character.

Overall, this activity has a positive impact on school residents, especially in improving students' digital literacy. In the future, the sustainability of this kind of program is needed so that education on the wise use of social media becomes part of a school culture that is sustainable and integrated in fostering student character.

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