

## **SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY: COMPARISON BETWEEN STUDENTS IN MOUNTAIN AND COASTAL AREAS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC PSYCHOLOGY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The development of digital technology in education is a necessity that must be connected to the learning process. This study aimed to describe the analysis of social media literacy in high school students in Samosir and Belawan areas. There were 50 students who were selected according to research needs. This research was conducted from the first week of January 2023 to the second week of March 2023. The method used in this research was a descriptive qualitative research method. Questionnaires were used in collecting the data. They were distributed to the research respondents. The results of the study showed that students in each school do not only use the internet as a means of finding information but also use it as a means of learning. There was a significant difference from the media content statement that was widely viewed; as many as 50% of high school respondents in Samosir chose educational content as the most frequently accessed social media, and 38% of high school respondents in Belawan selected entertainment content that is currently viral. Differences in the choice of social media content most frequently accessed by students can ultimately lead to life choices that students will determine.

**Keywords:** Social Media Literacy, Mountain Areas, Coastal Areas, Islamic Psychology

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence (the stage between 10 and 24 years) is a period characterized by increased sensitivity to social stimuli and an increased need for peer interaction (Orben et al., 2020). Adjusting to and becoming a contributing member of the social world can be considered one of the most fundamental tasks of adolescence (Crone & Fuligni, 2020). In this era of digitalization, technological advances are so rapid in conveying all information and every individual is expected to be able to use technology appropriately. Social media, in general, is an essential tool for learning various things, such as climate communication, political polarization, and so on. Social media also considers the literature broadly (Falkenberg et al., 2022). This makes every individual, especially teenagers, obliged to sort

information validated for its truth before disseminating it.

Based on a survey conducted by the Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers (APJII) (2023), internet access in Indonesia has reached 78.19 percent or accessed by 215,626,156 people out of a total population of 275,77,901 people. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (2021) from the 2021 Susenas Survey data collection, 62.10 percent of Indonesia's population will have internet access in 2021. This high internet use reflects a climate of information openness and public acceptance of technological developments and changes towards an information society. Indonesia's high number of internet users must be kept from the rapid development of cell phones. In 2021, it was recorded that 90.54 percent of households in Indonesia already own or control at least one

cell phone number. This figure increased compared to conditions in 2018 which reached 88.46 percent.

These data showed that internet users, especially adolescents, continue to grow yearly. Teenagers often need help determining which information is validated as accurate. However, when searching for such information on the internet and social media, one is confronted with an overflow of information known as an 'infodemic', which includes a mixture of facts and hoaxes that are difficult to separate from one another (Choudrie et al., 2021). This is due to the low literacy culture of the Indonesian population.

In connection with this discussion, certainly, is related to the Islamic Psychology perspective, which is a religion-based perspective that sincerely tries to include spiritual factors and underlines the importance of religion in the life of the people (Iqbal & Skinner, 2021). Islam is also very concerned about ethics in using social media. This can be seen from the ethics regulated in using social media in the Qur'an. This ethics is contained in the following word of Allah SWT:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

Meaning: *"O you who believe! Fear Allah and speak the truth"* (QS. Al-Ahzab: 70).

As quoted from the interpretation of Ibn Kathir, this surah explains the commands of Allah SWT to His believing servants. Some commands are fearing Him, worshiping only Him, and saying the right words. In this era of advanced technological development, it must be kept from providing or obtaining sources of information from anywhere. This also applies to social media, Allah SWT orders his people to continually disseminate correct information according to the facts and not false information or hoaxes.

According to the information from the Ministry of Home Affairs (2021), Indonesia is a country in which the literacy level is in the bottom ten countries - 62 out of 70 countries. In addition, based on the result of a survey of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) which was conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2019 shows the low level of literacy in Indonesia, especially in media literacy. Furthermore, individuals only read some parts of the information without reading it carefully which can lead to a severe problem, for instance, fake news or hoaxes can be spread widely.

Everyone has different levels of literacy, depending on everyone's ability to explore and analyze certain information or knowledge. Therefore, educational frameworks and models to meet digital literacy education must reflect appropriate digital literacy skills (Reddy et al., 2023). Literacy is an individual's ability to read, understand, write, and use information effectively in various situations (Kurniawan et al., 2021). In line with this idea, Prihatin et al. (2020) define literacy as an individual's ability to understand and use information appropriately, effectively, and efficiently. Literacy is not only limited to a person's ability to read and write, but the rapid development of information and communication technology has led to the importance of media literacy for every individual.

According to the study of Islamic Psychology, referring to the Qur'an, literacy itself has the same meaning as reading. One of them can be seen in the following words of Allah SWT:

اقْرَأْ كِتَابَكَ كَفَىٰ بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيبٌ

Meaning: *"Read the book (writing your charity). It is sufficient for you to be yourself"*

*today as an account for yourself (about everything you will do)" (QS. Al-Isra': 14).*

This verse talks about when humans die, they will be resurrected from the dark realm, and every servant will be held accountable for his actions. All human's actions are recorded in accurate, complete, and thorough records, known as books. After they received the book, they were asked to read it. What Allah SWT mentions in His verse is reading, as the key to all essential knowledge and practice. By reading, someone will understand the knowledge or information conveyed clearly, so this can reduce misunderstandings or confusion about what is being read.

Media literacy is an important role that every individual must have. According to Hobbs (2021), media literacy is an individual's ability to understand and use media critically, reflectively, and responsibly. Media literacy includes understanding how media is created, how messages are conveyed, and how media influence society and culture. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze social media literacy among high school students in coastal areas. On average, it combines the characteristics of urban and rural communities (Hamzah et al., 2020) and an analysis of social media literacy among high school students in mountainous areas.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this research was a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The result of the descriptive approach was obtained from the field regarding the analysis of media literacy in high school students in the coastal area, to be precise in Belawan and the mountainous area located in Samosir, presented in the form of a narrative presentation.

This research was conducted from the first week of January 2023 to the second week of March 2023. Interviews and questionnaires

were used in collecting the data. The sampling technique was determined by using purposive sampling. The research locations were conducted at several high schools (SMA) in Samosir and Belawan. The subjects in this study were 50 people, with details of 25 people coming from the Belawan area and 25 from the Samosir area. The focus of this research was to describe the level of social media literacy among high school students in Belawan, a coastal area, and high school in Samosir, a mountainous area.

The researcher presents the statement instruments given to 50 respondents in the form of a table below:

Table 1. Statement Instrument

NO	Statement	Answer Choices
1.	Can internet media, especially social media, help you find the information you need?	Agree/Disagree
2.	Are you able to use internet media properly?	Agree/Disagree
3.	Do you use the internet more often than printed media in finding and gathering information?	Agree/Disagree
4.	Do you use the internet more often to find learning information than access social media?	Agree/Disagree
5.	Which content on social media is most frequently accessed?	a. Viral Entertainment Content b. Film Series and Entertainment c. Educational and Motivational Content d. Celebrity News

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following results were obtained in a survey conducted on both schools in Samosir and Belawan. There was a little difference in the results for the first question submitted by researchers at high schools in Samosir and Belawan areas: 93% of high school students in Samosir agreed that the internet, especially social media, could help them find information, and 7% of respondents did not agree with the question. Meanwhile, at SMA in

Belawan, 91% of respondents agreed, while the other 9% did not agree that internet media, especially social media, can help them find the information they need (see Figure 1).

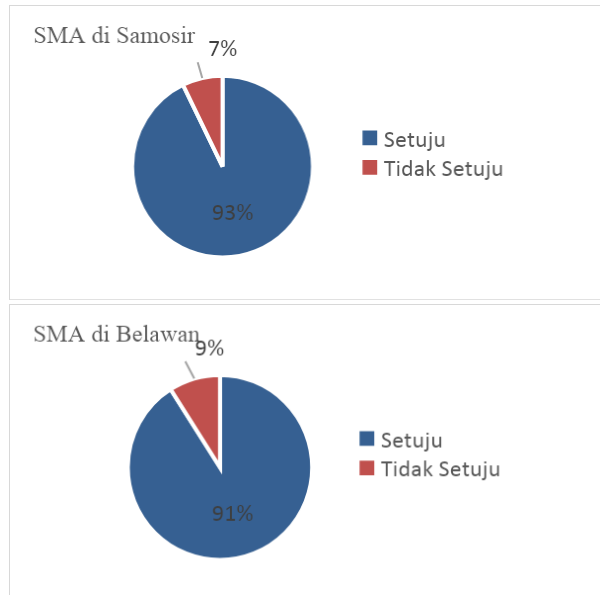


Figure 1. Can Internet Media Help in Finding Information?

This is in line with the results of our research (Al-Rahmi et al., 2021; Arshad et al., 2020; Rishika et al., 2021), regarding the function of internet media, especially social media, not only as a communication tool but also as an information medium. Therefore, the results of this study explained that every student should be able to use and utilize internet media primarily to support the continuity of learning.

Then, on the second question regarding students' ability to access internet media properly, the results were quite different between SMA in Samosir and Belawan. As many as 89% of respondents agreed, and as many as 11% of respondents disagreed with the question in Samosir. In comparison of respondents in Belawan, 73% agreed, and 27% disagreed regarding whether they could use internet media properly (see Figure 2). This was supported by the results of the research (Chawla & Goyal, 2021) which explained that in an era of progressing globalization, it is a big

challenge for people who are far from the reach of urban areas and have good skills in accessing internet media.

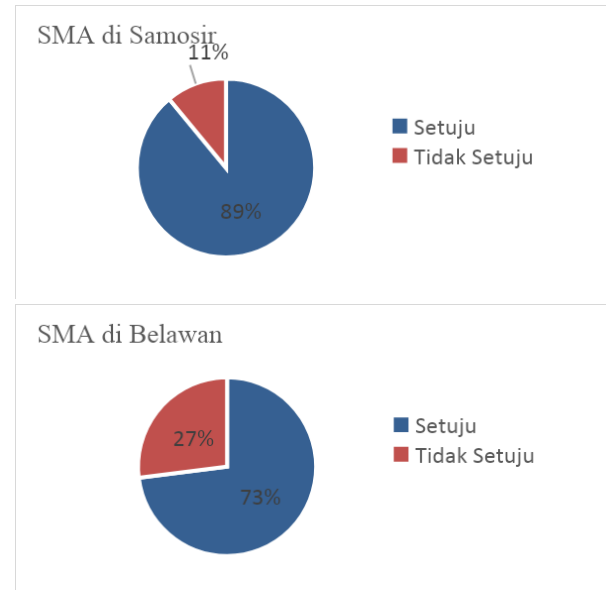


Figure 2. Can You Use Internet Media Properly?

The opinion that students can use social media well goes hand in hand with research by (Barrios Aguirre et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021) that the internet is not only a benchmark for technological development but also for developments in education. Therefore, every student must be able to master internet media access well, especially since the Covid-19 period. All students must have mastery over internet media access as a means of information and support in the learning process. However, it is undeniable that some students still need to have a better ability to access information media.

Furthermore, the researchers found that 96.5% of respondents agreed and 3.5% disagreed with the question in Samosir, meanwhile, 70% of respondents agreed, and 30% of the students in Belawan disagreed with the question regarding whether they use internet media more often than printed media in searching and collecting information (see Figure 3).

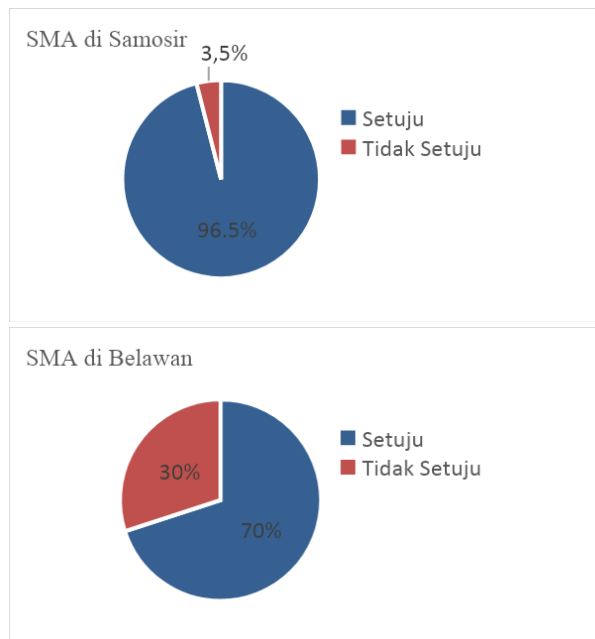


Figure 3. Do You Use Internet Media More Often Than Printed Media in Searching and Gathering Information?

The internet media is a door that takes people to their goals through shortcuts. Obtaining and collecting information is relatively easy nowadays because through internet media, all information is easily accessible and unlimited (Kashif et al., 2021; Lu et al., 2021; Zhuravskaya et al., 2020). However, not only the access to find information is limited but also the ability to find information is also an obstacle because these limitations prevent them from getting as much information as people who can access information properly.

Through further questions posed by the researcher, the results showed that 68% of respondents agreed, and 32% students in Samosir disagreed, meanwhile, 52% of respondents agreed, and 48% students in Belawan did not agree with the question regarding whether they used the internet more often to find learning information than accessing social media (see figure 4). This means that many students still use the internet, not as a support for learning but more often to access social media.

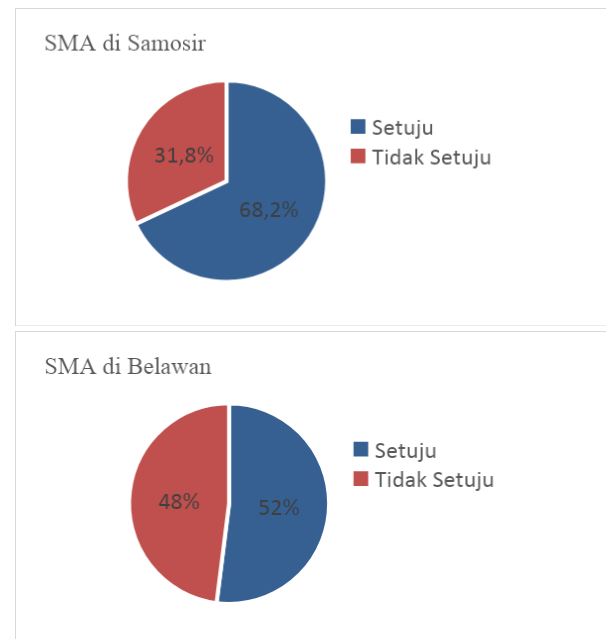
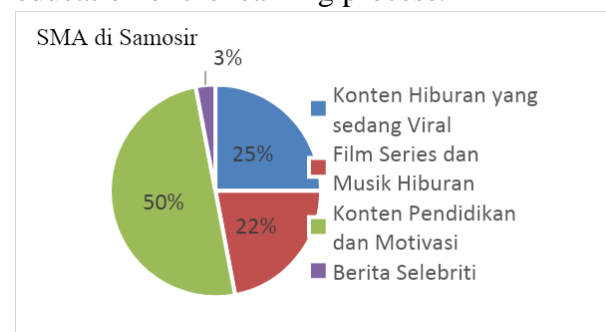


Figure 4. Do You Use Internet Media More Often to Find Learning Information than Social Media?

The previous research (Alhendawi & Masa'deh, 2021; Alsharafat & Al-Qudah, 2021; Febrianto et al., 2020) also stated that although there is not much access to internet media as means of information, since the Covid-19 period, it can be assessed that every student is required to access the internet for the teaching and learning process. Thus, in addition to providing more effective learning during the ban on meeting face to face, students also become more up to date on the development of information in the field of education or the learning process.





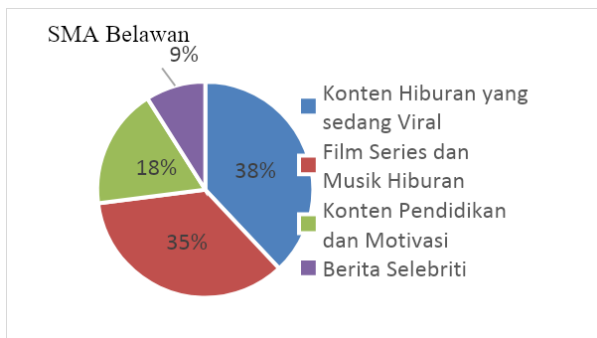


Figure 5. Most Accessed Social Media Content

Furthermore, based on the results of the most accessed social media content by the students in Samosir and Belawan, 50% of respondents in Samosir chose educational content as the most frequently accessed social media and 38% of respondents in Belawan chose entertainment content that is currently viral. Those entertainment contents are straightforward reaching all ages. The contents are most often accessed on several applications such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Youtube. The educational and motivational content that is often accessed is educational and motivational content presented in the form of podcasts. Circulating media content that leads to education gives teenagers many choices in learning and developing scientific insights.

In the view of Islam, the discussion regarding the benefits of spreading knowledge is explained in the words of Rasulullah SAW as follows:

مَنْ دَعَا إِلَى هُدًى كَانَ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أُجُورِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أُجُورِهِمْ شَيْئًا

Meaning: "Whoever shows (a) goodness, he will get a reward like the reward of those who do it without reducing their reward in the least" (HR. Muslim no. 2674).

In this hadith, it is explained that whoever does Tablighi or shows kindness to others will do that kindness, and then we will get the reward as we did without reducing the

reward we get. This is in line with the use of social media in disseminating educational content, which is positively beneficial for many people.

In line with the research by (Gu & Wang, 2021; Hsu & Wu, 2020), it is stated that tiktok is currently the application most often used to obtain entertainment content that is currently viral. However, this application does not only contain entertainment but also the latest information, such as the latest news, which is presented more interestingly. Then, as many as 22% of high school respondents in Samosir and 35% of high schools in Belawan chose film series and music entertainment as media content that is often seen after entertainment content that is currently viral. Even though it is often considered not positive, watching film series and listening to music entertainment also has a positive impact, meaning that it depends on the film or music one hears.

As for the types of content, music, entertainment, and films are also frequently accessed, as also revealed in research (Zhu et al., 2021) that the scale of involvement in watching films can be well adapted to different cultural contexts and can be relied upon in measuring involvement in watching films. With the existence of a film, it can be well adapted by several people from various cultures and different parts of the country. Then not only films but music also has many positive messages, such as the song Belahan Hatiku by Andien, which has a profound meaning regarding the love of parents for their children.

## CONCLUSION

Access to social media with the help of the internet is now a common sight in human life. There are various human needs in accessing social media, starting for business, just entertainment, self-development, alternative educational media, and even being

used as a means of learning media. In learning, the benefits of social media are to help teachers and students connect with the assignments given. However, student access to social media is also considered noteworthy. The study results prove significant differences in the media content statements that students at Samosir High School and Belawan High School most frequently access. It was found that as many as 50% of high school respondents in Samosir chose educational content as the most frequently accessed social media, and 38% of respondents in Belawan chose entertainment content currently viral as the social media most frequently accessed. Differences in media content most frequently accessed by students can ultimately shape their enthusiasm for higher education. The role of family and school is needed to educate students that they must be able to rule over technological advances.

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