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JOURNAL OF INDONESIAN ISLAMIC STUDIES

<https://ejournal.iainpalopo.ac.id/index.php/jiis/>

The Influence of Social Media Usage on Adolescents' Legal Awareness in Paccinongang Subdistrict, Gowa Regency

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Articles

Information

History:

Received: April

Approved: April

Publish: April

Keywords: social media usage, legal awareness, adolescents, digital behavior, mixed methods

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of social media usage on adolescents' legal awareness in Paccinongang Subdistrict, Gowa Regency. The background of this research is based on the high intensity of social media use among adolescents, which has the potential to influence their understanding and legal behavior in the digital space. This study employs a mixed methods approach with a sequential explanatory design. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires administered to 93 respondents and analyzed using simple linear regression, while qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with nine informants. The results show that social media usage has a positive and significant effect on adolescents' legal awareness ($p < 0.05$), with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 50.7%. Qualitative findings reveal that social media plays a role in shaping legal knowledge, attitudes, and behavior through content exposure, digital interaction, and media experience. This study concludes that social media has the potential to serve as an effective tool in enhancing adolescents' legal awareness when utilized wisely and in an educational manner.

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Introduction

The development of digital technology has significantly transformed patterns of communication in society, particularly among adolescents. The emergence of social media as part of new media has shifted communication from a one-way process to one that is interactive and participatory. Social media enables individuals not only to receive information but also to actively produce and share it. Its user-generated content characteristic makes social media a digital public space with a substantial influence on shaping patterns of social interaction, including how adolescents think, behave, and act (Nasrullah, 2017).

The high intensity of social media usage among adolescents indicates that it has become an integral part of their daily lives. Adolescents utilize social media not only as a means of communication but also as a source of information, entertainment, and self-expression. This condition positions social media as a strategic factor in shaping various aspects of adolescent life, including legal awareness. In other words, social media influences not only social aspects but also has the potential to affect adolescents' understanding of legal norms and regulations.

Legal awareness is an important indicator in social life, reflecting the level of understanding and compliance of individuals with the law. It encompasses not only knowledge of existing rules but also understanding, attitudes, and behavior in adhering to legal norms (Ali, 2021). In the digital context, legal awareness expands in meaning, as individuals are required to understand various regulations related to digital activities, such as social media ethics, prohibitions against spreading hoaxes, hate speech, and privacy protection.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between social media and individual awareness or behavior. Research by Nasrullah (2017) highlights that social media serves as a space for social interaction that shapes users' perspectives and behavior. A study by Harahap et al. (2024) found that social media can function as a medium for digital literacy, including the dissemination of legal information. Furthermore, research by Kholis and Rigianti (2023) shows a positive relationship between the use of digital-based media and the development of students' critical awareness. In addition, data from APJII (2023) indicate that the increasing internet penetration in Indonesia is directly proportional to the rise of social media usage among adolescents, influencing their interaction patterns and access to information. Another study by Putri and Sari (2022) reveals that the intensity of social media use affects the formation of adolescents' attitudes and behavior, including their understanding of social norms and rules.

However, there is still a research gap. Most previous studies tend to focus on general digital literacy or social behavior, while studies that specifically examine the influence of social media usage on adolescents' legal awareness remain limited, particularly those integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In addition, research conducted within a local context, such as Paccinongang Subdistrict, Gowa Regency, is still scarce.

In reality, many adolescents still lack adequate legal awareness in their use of social media. This is reflected in the continued occurrence of various forms of legal violations in digital spaces, such as the spread of false information (hoaxes), hate speech, and communication behaviors that do not comply with legal and ethical norms. This condition

indicates a gap between the high level of social media usage and the level of legal awareness among adolescents.

Social media inherently has a dual role. On the one hand, it can serve as an effective educational tool for enhancing legal literacy through the rapid, widespread, and accessible dissemination of information. On the other hand, it also has the potential to spread inaccurate or misleading information, which may negatively influence adolescents' understanding of the law (Harahap et al., 2024).

This phenomenon also occurs in Paccinongang Subdistrict, Gowa Regency. Based on empirical observations, social media usage among adolescents in this area is relatively high, both in terms of frequency and duration. However, this high intensity of use has not been fully accompanied by adequate legal understanding, indicating a discrepancy between usage intensity and legal awareness.

Based on these issues, this study aims to analyze the influence of social media usage on adolescents' legal awareness in Paccinongang Subdistrict, Gowa Regency. In addition, this study aims to examine how social media contributes to shaping adolescents' legal knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. By integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of social media in shaping adolescents' legal awareness in the digital era.

Method

This study employs a mixed methods approach with a sequential explanatory design, combining quantitative and qualitative methods in stages. The first phase involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by qualitative data to provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the research findings.

The research was conducted in Paccinongang Subdistrict, Gowa Regency, from November 2025 to January 2026. The population consisted of adolescents aged 13–21 years who actively use social media, totaling approximately 1,200 individuals. The quantitative sample was determined using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error, resulting in 93 respondents. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, based on the consideration that not all members of the population meet the criteria relevant to the research objectives. Therefore, respondents were selected based on specific criteria, namely adolescents who actively use social media, ensuring that the data obtained are relevant and aligned with the focus of the study. The qualitative informants consisted of 9 adolescents selected based on different levels of social media usage intensity (high, medium, and low).

The research variables include social media usage as the independent variable (X) and adolescents' legal awareness as the dependent variable (Y). Quantitative data were collected using a questionnaire with a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, measuring respondents' level of agreement with each statement. The legal awareness variable was measured through several indicators, namely legal knowledge, legal understanding, legal attitudes, and legal behavior.

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression with the assistance of the JASP application, preceded by classical assumption tests (normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity). Hypothesis testing was

carried out at a significance level of 0.05. Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

The validity of the quantitative instruments was tested using Pearson correlation, while reliability was measured using Cronbach’s Alpha. The trustworthiness of qualitative data was ensured through source and method triangulation. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data was carried out at the final stage to produce more comprehensive and in-depth research findings.

Results

The results of the study indicate that social media usage among adolescents in Paccinongang Village is relatively high and has become an essential part of their daily lives. Social media is utilized not only as a source of entertainment but also as a medium for communication, information seeking, and self-expression. This condition demonstrates that social media plays a strategic role in shaping adolescents’ ways of thinking, attitudes, and behavior.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

	Descriptive Statistics	
	Penggunaan Media Sosial	Kesadaran Hukum Remaja
Valid	93	93
Missing	0	0
Mean	36.71	58.57
Std. Deviation	7.729	13.23
Minimum	16.00	15.00
Maximum	50.00	75.00

Based on Table 1, the level of social media usage is categorized as moderate, while adolescents’ legal awareness is categorized as fairly good.

Table 2. Normality Test Results

Fit Statistics		
Test	Statistic	p
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.075	.679

The significance value of 0.679 (> 0.05) indicates that the residual data are normally distributed. Therefore, the regression model meets the normality assumption.

Table 3. Model Summary

Model Summary - Adolescent Legal Awareness							
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE	Durbin-Watson		p
					Autocorrelation	Statistic	
M ₀	0.000	0.000	0.000	13.230	0.179	1.554	.029
M ₁	0.712	0.507	0.501	9.344	0.014	1.921	.681

Note. M₁ includes Social Media Use

The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.507 indicates that 50.7% of the variation in adolescents' legal awareness is influenced by social media usage, while the remaining 49.3% is influenced by other factors outside the model.

Table 4. ANOVA (F-Test) Results

Model		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
M ₁	Regression	8158	1	8157.76	93.44	< .001
	Residual	7945	91	87.31		
	Total	16103	92			

Note. M₁ includes Social Media Use

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

The F-test results show that the regression model is statistically significant, indicating that the model is appropriate for explaining the relationship between variables.

Table 5. t-Test Results (Regression Coefficients)

Model		Coefficients				
		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
M ₀	(Intercept)	58.570	1.372		42.693	< .001
M ₁	(Intercept)	13.842	4.728		2.928	.004
	Social Media Use	1.218	0.126	0.712	9.666	< .001

The regression equation is:

$$Y = 13.842 + 1.218X$$

This equation indicates that every one-unit increase in social media usage is followed by an increase of 1.218 units in adolescents' legal awareness. The significance value (<0.001) confirms that the effect is positive and statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

The regression analysis shows that social media usage has a positive and significant effect on adolescents' legal awareness. The regression coefficient of 1.218 indicates that higher levels of social media usage are associated with higher levels of legal awareness among adolescents. This finding suggests that social media functions as an effective learning medium that enables adolescents to gain an understanding of legal norms, digital ethics, and the legal consequences of activities in digital spaces.

The coefficient of determination (50.7%) indicates that social media usage is one of the main factors influencing adolescents' legal awareness. However, other factors such as family environment, formal education, and social interactions also contribute to shaping legal awareness.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that social media plays a role in shaping individuals' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Social media allows for the rapid and widespread dissemination of information, enabling adolescents to learn from various cases occurring in digital environments.

In addition, prior studies have shown that exposure to digital content containing social and legal values can increase individuals' awareness of norms and regulations. Therefore, this study reinforces the view that social media serves not only as a communication tool but also as a medium for education and social learning.

The positive influence of social media on adolescents' legal awareness can be explained through several factors. First, the high intensity of social media usage exposes adolescents to various types of information, including cases of legal violations such as hoaxes, hate speech, and misuse of personal data. This exposure indirectly enhances their understanding of legal rules and consequences.

Second, social interactions in digital media, such as discussions, comments, and content sharing, encourage adolescents to actively engage in understanding legal issues. This process strengthens the development of legal awareness through social interaction.

Third, social media provides contextual learning experiences. Adolescents tend to understand legal issues more easily when they are presented through real-life cases rather than purely theoretical explanations.

However, the impact of social media is not determined solely by usage intensity but also by usage patterns. Adolescents who access educational content tend to have a higher level of legal awareness compared to those who use social media mainly for entertainment. Additionally, interview findings indicate that adolescents' legal understanding is still largely practical and not yet fully supported by a comprehensive understanding of formal legal regulations.

Overall, social media plays a significant role in shaping adolescents' legal awareness in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Therefore, efforts to strengthen digital legal literacy through the roles of families, schools, and government are necessary to ensure that adolescents' legal awareness becomes more comprehensive, systematic, and sustainable.

Conclusion

This study answers the research problem by demonstrating that social media usage has an influence on adolescents' legal awareness in Paccinongang Subdistrict. The influence is positive and significant, indicating that social media can serve as a medium for shaping adolescents' legal knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. In addition, factors affecting legal awareness are not only limited to the intensity of usage but also include the type of content accessed and patterns of interaction in the digital space. Adolescents who engage with educational content tend to have better legal awareness compared to those who primarily use social media for entertainment.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that adolescents use social media wisely and selectively. Parents and schools need to strengthen supervision as well as provide digital and legal literacy education. The government is expected to enhance legal awareness campaigns through social media, while future researchers are encouraged to develop additional variables to produce broader and more in-depth findings.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the supervisor for guidance and valuable support throughout the research process. Appreciation is also extended to the Paccinongang Subdistrict, Gowa Regency, for granting permission to conduct the study, as well as to all respondents and informants for their participation. The author also thanks parents, family, and all parties who have provided support in completing this research.

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