

# Students' Digital Media Literacy: Effects on Social Character

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**Abstract:** The development of digital technology in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0 requires today's younger generations to demonstrate media literacy. It is often the case that cyber-crime happens among teenagers because they are misinformed. This study measures students' media literacy using individual competence framework which include technical skills, critical understanding, and communicative abilities. Respondents were 100 university undergraduate students in Indonesia selected randomly. The results showed that 60-80% respondents demonstrated medium level technical skills, 80-90% of them have low critical understanding, and 45% of them displayed medium communicative abilities. In addition, media literacy was found to significantly influence students' social character as much as 49%. The finding of this study implies the need for literacy education is imminent because low media literacy may lead to low social character.

**Index Terms:** media literacy; individual competence framework; social character

## I. INTRODUCTION

Media literacy is not only a matter of a person's ability to read, see and grasp information from the media, but it also is related to their ability to select, analyze, discover, and use media in accordance with rule-and-law-based values and norms. Hence, the information becomes feasible, useful and beneficial to communities when it is written, received and delivered. Hobbs (1999) explains that media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate various types of messages. Many studies have been done on media literacy (see Potter, 2004; Arke, 2004; Livingstone, 2004; Devito, 2008; Tormero, 2009; European Commission, 2009; Chen, 2011; lin, 2013; Miocic, 2014, etc.). In Indonesia, research on media literacy have been carried out as well (Adiputra, 2008; Arifianto, 2012; Adiarsi, 2015; Muttaqin, 2016; Yuniarin, 2017; Sholihudin, 2017, and others). The data confirmed that the research on media literacy are increasingly attracting more practitioners and academics.

Media literacy is referred to as someone's ability to convey information to the public appropriately. Fromm (1955, in Funk 1998:221) that point of view, society nothing but living, concrete individuals, and individual can live as social human being. A person's character and social skills will provide a clear function so that the ability to use the media will function as a unifier and reinforcement of humanity for differences in society. Tester (2003) discloses that media will make individuals attentive to their obligations and moral

issues that are created and expressed in different social situations

The Ministry of Communication and Information (2018) reported that internet users (online media literacy) are 54% or 143 million out of 265 million of Indonesia's total population. This shows an abundant number of people using online media at this time and this is increasing every year. What follows are the internet user data in Indonesia in 2019:



Fig 1. Number of Internet User Data In Indonesia in 2019  
Source

[www.boc.web.id/statistik-pengguna-digital-dan-internet-2019](http://www.boc.web.id/statistik-pengguna-digital-dan-internet-2019)

Furthermore, the average data of websites visited by Indonesian is presented in the following table:

Table 1 :The Average data of Websites Visited by Indonesian

#	WEBSITE	CATEGORY	MONTHLY TRAFFIC	TIME PER VISIT	PAGES PER VISIT
01	GOOGLE.COM	SEARCH	1,028,900,000	08M 06S	7.7
02	GOOGLE.CO.ID	SEARCH	702,300,000	07M 16S	6.6
03	FACEBOOK.COM	SOCIAL	605,200,000	10M 13S	10.3
04	YOUTUBE.COM	TV & VIDEO	504,400,000	26M 07S	11.2
05	TRIBUNNEWS.COM	NEWS	215,000,000	05M 42S	4.1
06	DETIK.COM	NEWS	137,300,000	06M 50S	3.8
07	TOKOPEDIA.COM	SHOPPING	124,500,000	04M 26S	4.3
08	YAHOO.COM	NEWS	89,800,000	07M 18S	6.6
09	WHATSAPP.COM	COMMUNICATION	88,500,000	02M 29S	2.0
10	BUKALAPAK.COM	SHOPPING	87,200,000	04M 41S	4.1

Source

[www.boc.web.id/statistik-pengguna-digital-dan-internet-2019](http://www.boc.web.id/statistik-pengguna-digital-dan-internet-2019)

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The data on the online media users in Indonesia is not necessarily in line with the character of the Indonesian nation because online media is often misused for things that disrupt the social character values and orders; for example, spreading slander, hoax and hatred and intolerance. Indonesia has been one of the targets of internet crime in the World since 2013.

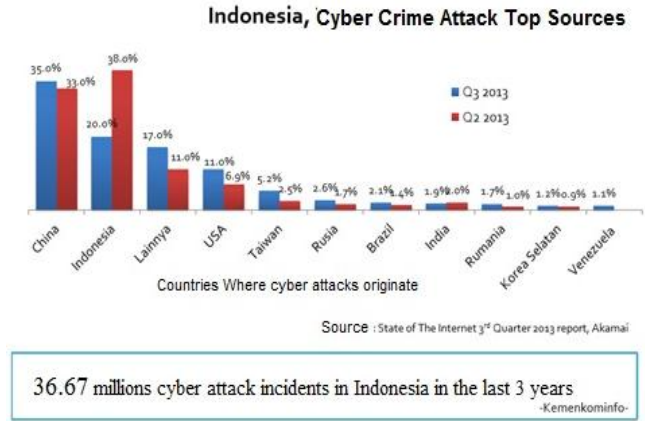


Figure 2. Indonesia Position in Cyber Crime Attack  
Source: Ministry of Communication and Information 2019

The high level of cybercrime indicates the low level of public media literacy. In fact, media literacy is someone's ability to appropriately use media implemented in the way he/she speaks and acts so that it becomes his perpetual personality. Social character is the ability to apply virtues in the form of speech, action and behavior that are in line with environmental interactions. Environmental interactions are related to the biological and non-biological environment. Social character concerns with personal ability and character to interact properly with others both in communication and in actions. Media literacy is the ability to use media, especially digital media, properly in the society. Thus, this ability intersects with one's social character. Social character is related to one's good personality. Social character will also be related to moral knowing, moral loving (valuing) and moral behavior (doing) (Lickona, 1991). While Rudd (1998) defines it "as the possession of moral values, social values or both" (Tetep, 2015: 3). This social character is the ability to express love, solidarity and tolerance (Fromm, in Tetep, 2015: 4)

Media literacy and social character are two attached entities closely related to individual competence because it is related to personality, character, and noble character. Individual Competencies are a person's ability to use media (Sholihudin, 2015; Potter, 2004). Media Literacy research conducted by Muttaqin (2016) showed that media literacy from the dimensions of rural teenage technical skills was at the medium level, the dimensions of critical understanding was at the basic level and communicative abilities level was at an advanced level. The study showed that the critical comprehension and knowledge skills are still low.

Based on the description, the researcher is interested in finding out the relationship between media literacy, individual competences and social character. To this end, the

problems are then formulated into the following questions: 1) What are the media literacy abilities of Students in Garut Regency, 2) Does Media Literacy Ability influence the social character of undergraduate students in Garut Regency, 3) Does individual competences in Media Literacy influence undergraduate students' social character?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Media Literacy

Media literacy refers to a person's ability to make good use of media. Potter (2004) defines media literacy as an exposure to media from which we interpret the meaning of every message we come across on it. In doing so, we build our own perspective about the message. This means that media literate individual will properly review the messages received from and delivered to the public. In ced.appstate.edu, it is explained that media literacy involves a person's ability to critically question what they see, hear and read (Sholihudin, 2014).

Students with good media literacy skills will have the ability to access, analyze and evaluate the power of images and messages they encounter every day (European Commission, 2009). The structure of media literacy according to the European Commission 2009 is illustrated as follows.

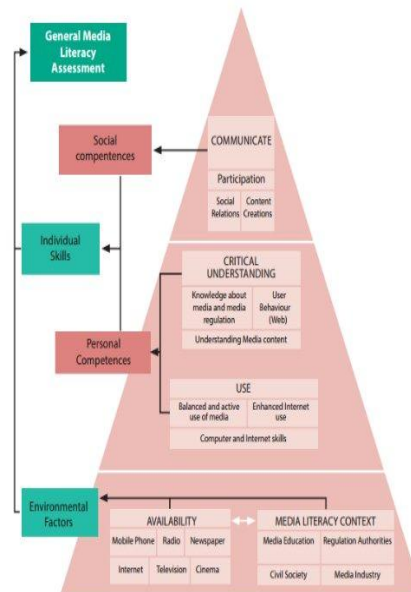


Fig 3. The Structure of Media Literacy Assessment Criteria  
Source: European Commission 2009

Based on the media literacy structure, there are 3 levels of media literacy skills, each of which can be described as follows:

[1] Level	[2] Descriptions
[3] Basic	[4] Individuals have a set of capabilities that allow basic use of media. Individuals at this level still have limitations in the use of internet media. Users know basic functions, and the media are used for certain purposes without clear direction. Their ability to think

	critically and communicate through is still limited.
[5] Medium	[6] Individuals are already fluent in using media and can carry out certain functions and complex operations. They know how to get and assess the information and use certain information search strategies.
[7] Advanced	[8] Individuals at this level are very active media users and aware various digital regulations. They are equipped with deep knowledge to analyze and then change a condition. They can establish communication and message creation relationships. Socially, they can activate group collaboration that allows them to solve problems.

Media literacy is essential for students because they are the future generation of the nation.

### B. Social Characters

How individuals think, feel, and act is shaped by their character (Miller et al., 2005). Miller et al. (2008) reiterate that social character is concerned with the doctrine of love, justice, equality, and sacrifice. Rudd in Haworth (2005) suggests that social character deals with human relationship. Accord into Fromm (1995), social character is an effort to form human forces in society. Humans can only live in a social environment. Humans cannot live alone because they are interdependent to others (Funk, 1998). With media literacy, these human assets can be realized. It's just that individual competence as explained by the European Commission is undeniably necessary. Technical skills, communication abilities and critical understanding will be strengths for students to have media literacy skills in shaping their humanity strength (social character).

### C. Individual Competence Framework

Individual competences are individual capacity to use media. The European Commission (2009) defines individual competencies as the ability to exercise various skills including inter-cognitive processing, analysis, communication, etc. Individual competencies have two variables, including:

#### 1) Personal Competences

It is a person's ability to use and analyze internet media content. Personal competencies have two dimensions including:

1. Technical skills, the technical ability to use internet media.
2. Critical understanding, is cognitive ability in using internet media such as the ability to understand, analyze, and evaluate internet media content.

#### 2) Social Competence

It is a communicative ability or the ability to communicate and build social relationships. This communication ability is related to a person's ability to socialize, participate and

deliver media content properly. Furthermore, the European Commission (2009, in Sholihudin, 2015) explains that the individual competency variables consist of: (a) technical skills which include computer & Internet skills, balances & active use of media and advanced internet use, (b) critical understanding which include understanding of media content and its functioning, knowledge about media and regulation, and use behavior, and (c) communicative abilities which include social relations, citizen participation and content creation.

### III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is explanatory which is quantitative in nature in which the data were numerical based on questionnaires consistent with the research variables. This quantitative data was then processed and analyzed using SPSS to partially or jointly prove and measure the influence between variables. The sample in this study was taken using a random sampling technique (Cresswel, 2016). The samples were one hundred undergraduate students in Garut. Furthermore, to answer the hypothesis in this study, multiple regression test was conducted with T Test and F Test and Determination Coefficient Test (Kusnendi, 2005).

### IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The discussion of research results is based on the formulation of the problem as follows:

#### A. Students' Media Literacy Based On The Individual Competency Framework

Based on the results of data processing by distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents, the following results were obtained:

**Table 2** Students' Media Literacy based on the Individual Competency Framework

Literacy Media Level	Basic		Medium		Advanced c.		Total		
	Freq (a)	% (a)	Freq (b)	% (b)	Freq (c)	% (c)	Freq a+b+c	% a+b+c	
1 <b>Technical Skills</b>	Computer and internet skills	75	0.75	15	0.15	10	0.10	100	100
	balances and active use of media	65	0.65	30	0.30	5	0.05	100	100
	advanced internet use	80	0.80	15	0.15	5	0.05	100	100
2 <b>Critical understanding</b>	understanding media content and its functioning	90	0.90	7	0.07	3	0.03	100	100

	knowledge about media and media regulation	85	0.85	10	0.10	5	0.05	100	100
	use behavior	80	0.80	18	0.18	2	0.02	100	100
3	<b>Communicative Abilities</b>								
	social relations	10	0.10	25	0.25	65	0.65	100	100
	citizen participation	50	0.50	35	0.35	15	0.15	100	100
	content creation	45	0.45	50	0.50	5	0.05	100	100

Table 4.1 illustrated that at the level of technical skills the media literacy skills of 100 respondents are at the basic level with 65-80% respondents. This proves that the average respondent's technical ability in media literacy is still at the basic level. While at the level of critical understanding, it can be stated that the media literacy abilities of the respondents from 100 college students in Garut are at the basic level in the range of 80-90% respondents. This means that most respondents do not critically understand the content he read, received and conveyed. Subsequently, the communicative abilities level has the highest frequency at the advanced level of 65% respondents. This means that respondents can establish a high relationship using internet or online media. While their citizen participation and content creation tend to be low or sit at the basic level.

Media literacy skills need to be supported by technical capabilities in the use of the media so that it will lead to an understanding of its ethical use and function so that the media will be used to hand on virtues. Media literacy of education must enable citizens to better understand and evaluate mediated information provide them the skills they need to understand the information in question (European Commission 2009; Potter 2004, 2008). Internet media that are widely used today will contribute well to the development of democracy when used properly. Moreover, young people need to be prepared for their future role as active citizens in democratic societies and becoming media literate is seen an important aspect of this process (European Commission 2009. Media literacy is seen as a promising way to get citizens informed and engaged in democracy (Mihailidis and Thevenin 2013). The prolific use of media emphasizes the importance of media literacy (Buckingham 2003). The ability to understand information received and come to good interpretation is an important part of media literacy skills.

**B. Media Literacy And Its Influence On Social Character**

To find out about the influence of media literacy consisting of technical skills, critical understanding and communicative abilities on strengthening the students' social character, the data were processed and analyzed using SPSS to determine the partial effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. For that reason, correlation test was done and explained as follows:

**1) The Effect of Technical Skills Variable on Social Characters**

**Table 3** The Effect of Technical Skills Variable on Social Characters

		TS	SC
TS	Pearson Correlation	1	.339**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	100	100
SC	Pearson Correlation	.339**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	100	100

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table showed that the results of the person product moment correlation test were 339 or 33.9% with a significance level of 0.001. This can be interpreted that the respondent's technical skills had a significant influence as much as 33.9% on their social character. According to Potter (2004), media literacy is the ability to interpret the meaning of a received message. Technical skills are someone's expertise in using media, especially digital / internet media which is currently flourishing. At present, technical capabilities in the use of media are needed by the global community. Tiday's and future global citizens need both to interpret and produce media texts (Hermida, 2009). Schaefer (2005) explains that media literacy refers to as a set of skills related to the production of a media message. Media literacy can improve cognitive, ethical, philosophical and aesthetic skills (Hobbs, 1998). Media literacy will have implications for the change in individual character.

**2) The Effect of Critical Understanding Variable on Social**

**Table 4** :Effect of Critical Understanding Variable on Social Characters

		CU	SC
CU	Pearson Correlation	1	.253*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011
	N	100	100
SC	Pearson Correlation	.253*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	
	N	100	100

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Critical Understanding influences the social character of the respondent by 253 with a significance level of 011 or a significant effect of 25.3%. As explained by Covington (2004), Media literacy consists of critical viewing skills and the ability to assess, evaluate, and interpret content. Likewise, Hobbs (1998) illustrates that academics or educators must have media literacy skills in two perspectives; conducting critical analysis of media



messages and learning to create the message itself. According to European Commission (2009), it is necessary for today's generation to get ready to play their future role as active citizens in democratic societies, and becoming media literate is a must in the process because a person's critical power symbolizes his ethical capacity, ethics and aesthetics as part of his character.

**3) The Effect of Communicative Ability Variables on Social Characters**

**Table 5:**The Effect of Communicative Ability on Social Characters

Correlations			
		CA	SC
CA	Pearson Correlation	1	.487**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
SC	Pearson Correlation	.487**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Communicative abilities refer to a person's ability to construct communication which is one of the characteristics of media literacy. Table 4.4 shows that communicative abilities significantly influence the social character of respondents by 487 with a significance of 000 or 48.7% significant effect on social character. Wan (2006) asserts that media literacy refers to the ability to use media to get informed, entertained, enriched, empowered, and to communicate. Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce information in various media such as television, video, cinema, advertisements, Internet and so on (Aufderheide, 1993). Media literacy is part of communication skills. Communication skills are very necessary for the formation of character and literacy behavior, especially in today's digital media. Low communication skills will cause low information processing ability, thought and speech integration problem, and adaptation problem (Wood & Hartshorne, 2017). Communication skills are individual skills to convey and receive messages in context. Communication helps students to articulate their ideas and thoughts either verbally, written, or nonverbally in various contexts with the aim that listeners can receive messages accurately and effectively (East, 2015). Thus, one's communication skills influence a person's social character. In fact, good communication skills can change one's social character.

**C. The Joint Effect of Individual competences in Media Literacy on social Character**

**Table 6 :**The Joint Effect of Individual competences in Media Literacy on social Character

ANOVA<sup>b</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	204.053	3	68.018	10.160	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	642.707	96	6.695		
	Total	846.760	99			

a. Predictors: (Constant), CA, CU, TS

b. Dependent Variable: SC

The results of multiple regression test shows that technical skill, critical understanding, and communicative abilities have significant influence on social character simultaneously.

**Table 7:**The Model Summary of Simultaneously Effect of Individual competences in Media Literacy on Social Character

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.491 <sup>a</sup>	.241	.217	2.58744

a. Predictors: (Constant), CA, CU, TS

Based on the table above it can be clarified that the joint effect between individual competences on social character is 491 or 49.1% or it can be said that they correlate significantly. Social character is a key to understanding the social process and in turn determines how individuals think, feel, and act (Miller 2005). He further said that social character concerns the doctrine of "like love, justice, equality, and sacrifice. Individual competences involve the ability to make good use of media literacy that prioritizes human values. Individual competences will provide an impulse to shape or change one's character. Media literacy includes several qualities such as the ability to criticize the media, the ability to produce media, the ability to describe media, the ability to explore media-making systems, the ability to explore various positions and the ability to think critically about media content. The media literacy can be broadly defined (Considine, Horton, & Moorman, 2009; Enochsson, 2005; Quiper, Volman, & Terwel, 2009; Ergün, 2015). Someone is said to have media literacy skills if he possesses such qualities as accepting the media impact on individuals and society, understanding of the mass communication process, developing strategies used to analyze and discuss media messages, realizing the media content as 'text' which provides insight and knowledge into the contemporary culture of humans and human beings themselves, increasing pleasure, understanding and appreciating the contents (Baran et al, 2000: 359).

The results of the European Commission 2009 stated that someone who has the knowledge and understanding to analyze the contents of social media can be categorized into three levels, namely advanced, medium, and basic. Furthermore, the



understanding the content of information on social media can be referred to as a critical ability to the impact of social media. According to Levin (1988, in Muttaqin, 2016:8), at the beginning of media literacy education, parents must emphasize ways to choose programs, organize the media, and develop strategies to use the media as a learning tool. Individual competences are competencies that individuals should have so that media literacy skills are appropriately directed. This is because media literacy is not only used personally but also communally - throughout the media community. Therefore, a good character is needed in instilling good human values.

### V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Media literacy skills are challenges and opportunities for every generation to keep up with changes and developments in information technology and digital technology. Media literacy skills must be balanced with individual competence so that it may lead to both individual and social character development.

Technical skills, critical understanding and communicative abilities are competencies that can be used for the formation of someone's individual and social character. Good social character does not allow digital media or internet media to be used for negative activities. In fact, the media will be directed at more positive activities. For this reason, media literacy with individual competencies will stimulate good social character building.

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