

Digital communication education for children in conflict with the law (ABH) at LPKA class II Maros in the Sekolah Kebangsaan Program

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Abstract

This research analyzes the importance of digital communication education in improving election information literacy and critical thinking skills for children in conflict with the law (ABH) in LPKA Class II, Maros. As a vulnerable group as well as novice voters, they have the right to education that includes aspects of digital communication. The findings show that a lack of skills in digital communication and information management is one of the factors causing the problems experienced by these children. In the digital era, the ability to communicate effectively, including through digital media, is a fundamental skill in their social life. This study involved 50 children who are novice voters and participated in the Sekolah Kebangsaan program, which aims to strengthen digital literacy and critical thinking skills, especially related to election issues. This research is a case study with interviews, observation, and documentation data collection techniques during class. The results of the study show that the children in conflict with the law have developed communication skills, information management, confidence, and critical thinking, especially on election issues.

Introduction

In Indonesia, the Child Protection Law Number 23 of 2002 states that a child is someone under 18 years of age, and their rights must be protected to grow and develop well. Especially the right to education, information, and protection, including information and activities in the digital space (Carmela & Suryaningsi, 2021). The digital era has brought major changes in the way humans obtain and manage information. Internet access is increasingly easy and widespread, meaning information can spread quickly without going through an adequate verification process. Children and teenagers are often easy targets for the spread of hoaxes, disinformation, and harmful content. Although this law does not specifically prohibit minors from accessing information and electronic transactions, it emphasizes the role of the government, society, and parents in protecting

children's rights, including in the digital space. However, in practice, parents often find it difficult to fully supervise their children, especially in the digital space, so many cases involve information and electronic transactions involving minors (Sirait, 2017). This condition gives rise to the need for critical thinking skills, namely the ability to analyze, evaluate, and filter information wisely, including managing information so that it can be used positively.

The internet penetration rate is 83.69%, and the contribution is 18.98%. Meanwhile, the Baby Boomers generation (born 1946-1965) has an internet penetration of 60.52% and a contribution of 6.58%. This illustrates that information technology has been widely adopted by various age groups in Indonesia (APJII, 2024). The pre-Boomer generation (born before 1945) has a penetration of 32% and a contribution of 0.24%, while the post-Gen Z generation (born after 2012) shows a penetration of 48% and a contribution of 9.17%. Digital Report states that Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest internet users in the world. (Yonatan, 2024).

This data shows that people, including children, have various levels of ability to utilize digital information spaces. On one hand, the internet opens up wider learning and creativity opportunities. However, low understanding can have an impact, especially on children as users. In Indonesia, the emergence of criminal cases involving minors due to a lack of understanding about the internet and gadgets is a serious concern.

The government, through KEMKOMINFO, especially through the Increasingly Digital Capable Movement program since 2017, has been improving the digital literacy competency of the community. This is one of the efforts to provide assistance in digital literacy that collaborates with various elements of society to equip the community, especially vulnerable groups, when interacting in digital spaces. This effort has not been fully able to reach all communities, including vulnerable groups, namely women, children, the elderly, and those in the 3T area (Monggillo et al., 2021).

One group that is vulnerable to a lack of information literacy is children who conflict with the law. At the Class II Special Children's Development Institute (LPKA), Maros (Sulianta, 2024). The main problem faced is ABH's lack of access to valid and credible sources of information (Inderasari et al., 2021). They often do not know where to obtain information, including election information, from, or how to verify the information they receive. These children face legal challenges and limitations in access to education and the development of information literacy skills. Without adequate critical thinking skills, they risk becoming victims of misinformation or even perpetrators of spreading misinformation, both in the real world and cyberspace, especially when they leave the LPKA class II later.

This phenomenon is worrying because cruel acts committed by children, even those still in school, are increasingly occurring (PikiranRakyat, 2024). One case of children not being wise in using social media describes a 15-year-old junior high school student from Batam, Riau Islands (Kepri), who was forced to sell herself to pay for her internet quota and daily needs. Batu Aji Police Chief Commissioner Jun Chaidir stated that this action was taken after there were reports from the public regarding the existence of online prostitution networks or distributors who used MiChat to buy and sell minors (Wowor, 2022). Another case that occurred with children as victims and perpetrators was the kidnapping and murder of child. Two young men kidnapped and killed an 11-year-old child in Makassar, South Sulawesi, after being lured by an offer of IDR 1.2 billion on social media to buy and sell a kidney (BBCNewsIndonesia, 2023).

According to the Indonesian Child Protection Law, a child is defined as anyone under the age of 18 who needs protection to grow and develop naturally. Although this law does not expressly prohibit minors from accessing information and electronic transactions, it highlights the important role of the government, society, and parents in protecting children's rights. However, in practice, parents often find it difficult to supervise their children adequately, resulting in a high number of cases involving electronic information and small transactions (Sirait, 2017). The number of criminal acts committed by children is increasing and varying. Based on data from the Correctional Database System, the number of children involved in legal cases in all Indonesian prisons and detention centers is still very high, with figures ranging from 2000 to 4000 children in 2019. The highest figure was recorded at 4286 children, which is very high compared to 2016, which only reached 2320 children. In 2017, the number increased to 2559 children, and in November 2018, it had reached 3142 children. When compared with 2016, this figure has experienced a significant increase of 90%, from 2320 children to 4286 children in 2019 (H et al., 2021).

Various crimes involving children, both as perpetrators and victims, are increasingly related to activities on the internet. The use of technology by children has brought major changes in social life that influence their values and behavior. Deviant behavior or violations of the law committed by children are often influenced by factors outside themselves (Kayowuan Lewoleba & Helmi Fahrozi, 2020). As a result, they have to undergo guidance at the LPKA or Special Children's Development Institute (Olivia Anggie Johar, Fahmi, 2022). Even though they are serving sentences, children still have the right to receive protection, knowledge, and assistance as guaranteed by law. The problem that arises is that children who are in conflict with the law have not received sufficient assistance on how to select information, recognize electronic transactions, and other things they will face after leaving LPKA. Apart from that, assistance regarding voting rights is also very important, especially for children who have entered the age of first-time voters (Malik et al., 2020). Children in Conflict with the Law (ABH) (Ernaningsih et al., 2018) are children who are involved in the legal process, either as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses of criminal acts. Data from the Directorate General of Corrections (Novrizaldi, 2022) shows that the number of children undergoing guidance at LPKA continues to increase every year. This shows that there is an urgent need to provide educational interventions that are not only formal but also able to equip them with life skills, including digital and information literacy. The solution to eradicating fake news (hoaxes) on social media can be done with three approaches, namely culture (literacy), technology, and law (Febriansyah & Muksin, 2021).

Children in conflict with the law are classified into three groups: children in conflict with the law, children as victims, and children as witnesses. So far, more attention has been given to children in conflict with the law and child victims. Children in conflict with the law are those who are involved in the legal system because they commit unlawful acts that harm themselves or others (Putra et al., 2018). According to Article 45 of the Criminal Code (KUHP), children aged 16 years and over can be tried in court for criminal offenses. Meanwhile, Article 4 of Law Number 3 of 1997 concerning Juvenile Justice states that children who are at least 8 years old, under 18 years old, and have never been married can be tried for criminal offenses. In juvenile justice, determining age is very important to determine whether someone can be punished and whether the criminal act can be legally accounted for (Febriandini, 2024). Children who conflict with the law still have rights and obligations that must be protected by the state. According to Article 1 of the Child Protection Law (2014), child protection includes all efforts to guarantee and protect

children and their rights, so that they can live, grow, develop, and participate optimally under human dignity, and are protected from violence and discrimination (Ariani, 2014). Every child has the right to purposeful protection to prevent, rehabilitate, and empower children who are victims of violence, exploitation, or neglect so they can survive and develop. Children's rights are one of the human rights that must be guaranteed, guarded, and upheld by parents, families, communities, the state government, and local governments (Indah et al., 2022).

Limited sources of information, learning resources, and human resources create a situation that has the potential to make them untrained in critical thinking, easily influenced by invalid information that can influence their decisions, especially as voters, and their independence in the future when they return to interacting with society. This research aims to analyze group communication implemented by Sekolah Kebangsaan as part of the Tular Nalar program in mentoring and information management education, especially in interactions that focus on developing critical thinking skills and the ability to manage information wisely through a non-formal education approach, independent education, and critical thinking training. This program not only teaches digital literacy specifically for elections but also ultimately develops information management in general using group communication methods as a medium to support the communication process in delivering interactive and inclusive information. These issues represent a critical aspect of communication learning in the digital era. Although the use of mobile devices is restricted within the LPKA, the development of critical thinking skills in processing and managing information serves as a foundational communication competency. These skills are not only essential for effective communication within their current environment but also equip the children with the necessary tools to navigate and engage responsibly in digital communication once they return to society. Children in conflict with the law the law who have entered the age of first-time voters, based on democratic election theory, must have three main competencies (Ariyanti et al., 2021):

a. Critical Competencies:

- Ability to analyze information objectively.
- Identify relevant and valid information related to candidates, parties, and programs.

b. Social Competence:

- Ability to communicate and discuss with others to understand various political perspectives.
- Form opinions based on a healthy and open exchange of ideas.

c. Ethical Competency:

- Awareness of moral responsibility in exercising the right to vote.
- Avoid the spread of unverified information.

Being in LPKA class II Maros poses unique challenges in obtaining information, particularly in relation to access to general public information, but they still participate in the regional elections. While this initiative functions as an entry point to communication education in digital contexts, the core emphasis of the Tular Nalar Sekolah Kebangsaan program is on fostering critical thinking in digital communication. The program encourages children to assess and reflect on the information they receive, particularly from digital sources, as a foundation for developing informed communication practices. This focus is especially relevant for children at LPKA Class II Maros, some of whom

struggle with basic digital communication competencies. In response, the program's delivery model is designed to create a supportive environment where participants can progressively develop their skills in expressing opinions, engaging in dialogue, and participating in collaborative decision-making—key aspects of effective and responsible communication in the digital era.

Communication research targeting the use of new media and digital literacy has become increasingly developed in recent years. The ability to innovate and adapt to technological changes is a crucial skill needed in the ever-evolving workforce, especially in sectors that rely on digital technology, such as information technology, education, and communication (Canton, 2021). Technological advances and new media issues are a concern not only for study programs on the island of Java but also outside Java. Technology plays a role in communication processes and practices in society towards an information society. Technology will also change the practical and theoretical map of communication. Another reason why this theme is gaining attention over the last five years has been the development of new media users, such as social media and internet users in Indonesia. (Gelgel, 2022)

Communication has an important role in providing assistance or education, because no matter how important the material or information is, without the right communication approach, it will be difficult to influence the party who is given the information or education. The Sekolah Kebangsaan uses the group communication method because the implementation takes place in the form of micro-teaching, where 10 children will be in groups accompanied by one facilitator. (Contagion of Reason, n.d.)

Choosing children in conflict with the law at LPKA II Maros as subjects in this research is interesting because previous research conducted at LPKA for class II children in Maros focused more on looking at various types of coaching in general at LPKA for class II children in Maros (Shaleh et al., 2022). Another research conducted focused on children in conflict with the law from the criminological aspect of a case study at a special development institution for grade II children in Karangasem (Putra et al., 2018). Focusing on the psychological side of children is also a matter of considerable research when targeting children in conflict with the law. (Dita Adistia et al., 2016; Haryaningsih & Hariyati, 2020). Therefore, this research serves its role as because it focuses on children in conflict with the law receiving assistance in Digital Communication which is managing information, especially election information which refers to their rights as citizens, which at the same time develops critical thinking abilities, with different methods, namely in small groups so that each child can get the opportunity to speak and be heard.

This program was then carried out to assist children who conflicted with the law at LPKA II Maros, especially after obtaining data on beginner voters contained in LPKA II Maros, apart from the phenomenon of children who conflicted with the law due to the misuse of information in the digital space. Based on observations and interviews with the management of LPKA II Maros, these children who have voting rights are currently undergoing their final year there, but have never received information about voting rights or other related information. This research aims to analyze the skills for managing information, critical thinking, and developing children's character carried out by Sekolah Kebangsaan as part of independence and citizenship education at LPKA for Class II Maros children.

Method

A case study approach with qualitative research reveals a particular case in depth. This Case Study focuses on children in conflict with the law who participated in the Sekolah Kebangsaan program at LPKA for Class II Children in Maros. Qualitative research (Salirawati, 2021) aims to explore the in-depth understanding and experiences of children in conflict with the law who take part in the Sekolah Kebangsaan program, which focuses on improving critical thinking and information management skills, as well as how these experiences influence them in the context of their everyday life and preparation as first-time voter. This article also goes through the process of the Ethics Committee of Universitas Negeri Makassar.

According to Yin (2018) case study is a research strategy that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined. Creswell & Poth (2018) state that in-depth exploration of a system or case is limited by time and activity, and is analyzed through the collection of rich data from various sources of information. Case studies are the right approach because this research requires a deep understanding of communication skills provided specifically through the Sekolah Kebangsaan program, which focuses on building critical thinking and daring to speak up, especially regarding information in the digital space.

Moreover, it is also the main reason why case studies are the right choice because they are carried out on children in conflict with the law at the LPKA Class II children in Maros. If the program is done in other groups of children, of course, it also requires a different approach. This approach helps researchers to understand the subjective experiences of children dealing with the law in the learning process they undergo at LPKA.

Results and Discussion

Sekolah Kebangsaan Tular Nalar organized by MAFINDO, Google.org. Love Frankie 2024 aims to train participants' critical thinking and digital literacy skills. This program aims to help children in LPKA class II Maros with 5 facilitators and accompanied by 50 children to become a place for holding Sekolah Kebangsaan activities which is one of the Tular Nalar programs, as previously this Program targets young people as beginner voters to provide a understanding regarding hoaxes so that novice voters become more resilient and immune to various potential issues and hoaxes later. In this activity, Mafindo Makassar had the opportunity to accompany children assisted by LPKA Class II Maros to gain knowledge about elections. Communication skills in the digital platforms, such as understanding the importance of fact-checking, recognizing hoaxes, and managing information wisely, are relevant to help them adapt to the challenges of the digital era when they return to society. Group sessions started with the first segment, where each group was given the same opportunity to exchange the participants' opinions and experiences regarding the election. Some of them have already participated in democratic parties, namely in elections, and others have never been involved at all. Even though the participants are inmates and isolated from social media, they still get some information related to the outside world, of course, through television broadcasts, allowing them to observe news related to the election, information about who the current president is, and who was elected.

Barriers to the Effective Exercise of the Right to Information

Human Rights (HAM) are rights inherent in every human being, regardless of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or other status. Everyone has the right

to human rights, without discrimination. To ensure its fulfillment, human rights must be protected by laws and regulations, including the constitution of each country. For Indonesia, the Pancasila philosophy justifies and promotes human rights. The right to obtain information (openness of information) is one of the human rights that can be reduced. The right to freedom of information is a human right that originates from natural rights (rights that exist from the time humans are born), such as the right to life, the right to independence, and the right to own (Waluyo, 2022). The Special Criminal Justice System for Children undoubtedly has a special focus on the future interests of children and society and incorporates restorative justice ideas (Triputra et al., 2022). Children's rights should be considered and fulfilled in cases of Children in Conflict with the Law, but the research shows children's rights are often ignored, for example, in the early stages of the legal process without being accompanied by parents or legal representatives during police examinations or when making official reports; for this reason, it is necessary to consult with community counselors so that children's rights in the legal process can be fulfilled (Sofyan, 2020).

The large number of crimes committed by young people is caused by a lack of parental attention, as well as advances in cell phone and internet technology. The influence of their peer environment has a significant impact on children's views on socializing and processing information. Some children in LPKA class II Maros get involved in problems originating from their ignorance in using gadgets, their inability to digest information, and communicate is one of the causes and even the main reason they have to deal with the law. The results of the research show that children in LPKA Class II Maros still, Children do not receive optimal assistance related to information management and digital communication. Limited technological facilities and access to social media are the main factors that influence this. Children often only get information from limited sources without the ability to verify or analyze it critically. This strengthens the urgency of digital literacy programs such as the Tular Nalar Sekolah Kebangsaan Program.

Interactive Communication Approach

The interactive approach implemented by Sekolah Kebangsaan aims to ensure that participants can understand the material in depth while still feeling involved and motivated. This method is designed to meet the learning needs of children in conflict with the law (ABH) at LPKA, who tend to require a different learning experience from formal schools, by combining learning and play to create a fun experience for participants. Live simulations, group discussions, and teaching aids are used to facilitate mentoring.

Group communication is usually used to convey information, expand knowledge, strengthen or change attitudes and behavior, improve mental health, and increase awareness. Michael Burgoon (Mukarom, 2020) defines group communication as "face-to-face interaction of three or more people, for a recognized purpose such as sharing information, self-preservation, or problem solving, so that members can remember the personal characteristics of other members accurately".

Group communication is formed not only to solve problems in groups but also to be used to complete tasks. Group communication contains patterns among group members and continues to develop without realizing it; these patterns are generated through a series of rules and resources owned by group members (Aldino et al., 2020). Group communication helps understand how interaction and communication occur in a group context (Maulani et al., 2024).

Increased Self-Confidence

Through Sekolah Kebangsaan activities, children feel valued and encouraged to actively participate, which helps them build self-confidence (Tular Nalar, n.d.). Participants are invited to actively contribute to discussions and activities. No answer is considered “wrong” as long as the participant tries to analyze the information and the facilitator gives appreciation for each to participant’s efforts and participation. Small groups become closer in discussions, causing the children to feel more confident in expressing their opinions and solving problems (Özelçi & Çalışkan, 2019). Other research explains that confidence and feeling listened to make children feel brave to express their opinions, discuss, and be actively involved in socialization and educational activities on their own, helping them to think critically (Kurniawaty et al., 2022). They begin to see that they have the ability to think critically and make decisions independently. The delivery of Sekolah Kebangsaan material, which is carried out in small groups, uses discussions and games to make children more actively involved, understand the material, and then try to solve problems by working together in the group. Games sessions are always a part of breaking the ice and uplifting when used in education (Lintangsari et al., 2022; Samin et al., 2022). This approach certainly not only has an impact on the delivery of material, but is also expected to develop confidence, critical thinking, and independence in children. The government continues to strive to ensure that children conflict with the law have the right to information and education like other children and that they encouraged to have the ability to live their lives outside of LPKA in the future (Novrizaldi, 2022; Olivia Anggie Johar, Fahmi, 2022).

Strengthening Understanding of Digital Literacy

Whether the information obtained is accurate or not must be interpreted critically so as not to become a victim of hoaxes or misleading information. Critical thinking is a combination of talent and understanding, which includes the ability to play with words, sensitivity to context, emotions, and feelings, as well as openness to creativity and learning new things. People who have critical thinking skills are expected to be able to make the right decisions, explain the reasons, and solve unexpected situations. Hoaxes, incitement, slander, and hate speech on social media must be handled not only structurally and legally but also culturally through media literacy programs. This is done to empower netizens to respond to the spread of hate speech online, especially on social media. Netizens with high media literacy are not only aware of communication ethics but also have constructive skills in receiving, producing, and disseminating information material (news). Through literacy and education models. People, especially children, could be wise in responding to various information circulating, fostering a sense of security and peace in Indonesia’s diverse society.

To adapt the information in the digital platform, the facilitator provided an example of information using a paper, the children were then to check the information with the analysis of the children, and then give a clue whether the information was a hoax or not. The next action they took was whether to share the information, reprimand the person who shared it, or discuss important things related to ethics in communicating, especially in the digital space, and direct communication. This is an important skill to help them adapt to the challenges of the digital era when they eventually return to society.

Participants are taught how to detect hoaxes, verify information, and understand the importance of critical thinking in checking news sources and checking trusted and credible sources. Children are taught to compare information that bears differences in content because to have them understand how to manage digital information, they can

recognize the signs of hoaxes, sensational titles, no clear author, or facts that do not support the claim. In Sekolah Kebangsaan, children are taught how to check news before spreading it widely. Participants demonstrated an increased ability to recognize false information and understand the importance of verifying each story before spreading it.

Conclusion

Delivering digital communication education to children in conflict with the law (ABH) at LPKA Class II Maros through the Tular Nalar Sekolah Kebangsaan program comes with distinct challenges, particularly due to restrictions on the use of digital devices. Nonetheless, foundational elements of digital communication, such as information management, critical thinking, and the ability to assess the credibility of information, remain focused on the program's approach. These competencies not only enhance the children's communication skills but also strengthen their capacity to navigate information critically within a restricted environment. By integrating national values, fostering digital literacy, building self-confidence, and encouraging active participation, the program offers a meaningful learning experience. Despite limitations in infrastructure, the program's creative methods have ensured its successful implementation and positive reception. Ultimately, this initiative contributes to helping nurture children into thoughtful, self-reliant, and principled individuals.

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