

## Conference Paper

# The Importance of Social Media Literacy for Students in Globalization Age

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## Abstract

Globalization has meant that the world is simply becoming smaller and more connected. This comes at a cost – that is there is also a risk that globalization has adverse effects when countries use it to spread their agenda through soft power diplomacy. Through qualitative descriptive method, this paper aims to examine to what extent the young generation can be taught to be more selective in grappling with the abundant information, especially information related to soft power diplomacy in the midst of globalization through online/social media literacy.

**Keywords:** globalization, online media literacy, social media, students, soft power diplomacy

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## 1. Background

Mass media has become a source of information for people who are able to deploy a variety of messages, ranging from economic information, political, economic, social and cultural to defense and security. In today's digital era, information dissemination channels are increasing, along with the easy accessibility to all sorts of information. Fog ([1]: 2) says the media's role in a globalized world is to identify the issues and add value to the glut of information for citizens to develop themselves so that they can learn, select, and play an active role with the things that promote a nation. McQuail (in [4]: 67) says that the media are primarily a disseminator of information, a sustainer of national development, entertainer and mobiliser of public opinion. The McQuail explanation if associated with emerging international issues makes it clear that the mass media play an important role. This is because information is the community needs, in line with the development of human life which make the information as a plus for them, especially in community life and interaction as social beings.

Beside the role and the function, mass media has negative impact too. Mehraj, et al. ([3]: 61) found that mass media has a certain impact, especially for adolescents. It causes fears and phobias. It is certainly based on the information that is displayed on

the mass media, which consists of a variety of themes. Adolescents as a group in the transition from childhood to adulthood, tend to have a conflict-prone condition. The search for identity becomes one of the problems important to adolescents, so they often do things that originated from trial and error, which does not always end up on the positive ([7]: 72).

### 1.1. Social Media

Although conventional media such as newspapers, television and radio stations have been using technology to generate maximum output, the growing trend of Internet usage has an impact on the decline in the use of the conventional media. The increase in the number of internet users is also accompanied by the increased access to social media as the new mass media in society.

The rapid penetration of the Internet and the increasing number of social media users trigger the conventional media to direct media content via the Internet, particularly through social media. The conventional mass media began to implement its content delivery online so that the audience can have access to the media content via online news sites directly through smartphones. This allows the audience to stay updated with the latest info and news even when it was busy replying to a short message from a friend without having to turn on the television first.

Social media is an unpaid media and people do not need to have any special skills in programming to use it. Ease in making social media account, the existence of self in following the lifestyle as well as their peers easily obtain information to encourage people to create social media accounts.

Oxford Dictionaries define social media as a website and an application that allows users to create and share the content of news or articles, or also to participate in social networking. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Line and Vine are the examples of social media. Everything that can be accessed by the internet and can be used for sharing information and ideas can be considered as social media.

Social media is very influential on the public mindset because users are not only able to absorb the information presented, but can submit feedback directly. By default, each user could also have been influenced by feedback from other users that may affect personal opinion on certain issues. This is why social media is so important for certain groups whose aim is to lead a group of people toward a particular opinion on certain issues.

## 1.2. Soft Power Diplomacy

In political science, there is a technical term *Soft Power Diplomacy* or diplomacy with subtle ways, a term popularized by Joseph Nye. The sense is the ability of a party (in this case the holders of power) to influence others through cooperation by leaving the elements of 'coercion' or hard power. In other words, through Soft Power, a party may get something he wanted happened because the other party also wants to do it. There is no coercion here; that there is an element of attraction or infatuation. In this case, we can make other people confirm our view and finally agree with us.

The ability to shape the preferences of others have tended to be associated with the assets being invisible, such as an attractive personality, culture, values and political institutions, and policies that look is based on the correct legal and moral authority. If a leader represents the values espoused that lead people, it will be easier for him to lead them.

A concrete example of the successful use of Soft Power Diplomacy is the best-selling films produced in Hollywood. Through films produced in Hollywood, people around the world recognize the western cultures in previously unknown era. We came to know the name of the city and locations in the United States. We came to know how to establish a relationship with the opposite sex. We learned how to do a celebration like Valentine's Day, April Fool's Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Halloween. Though the celebrations previously not known by many people in other parts of the world.

Through the production of Hollywood movies, for example, we also came to believe that the United States has greatness in many areas; their army is advanced in many areas, SWAT is capable of disabling all kinds of criminals, the government is able to provide jobs for its citizens, fast food looked so tasty and healthy, and so forth. Through these films, people all over the world will know and say, "Wow, United States is great. I want to stay there" or "I wish I was born in United States," it also has the possibility to go other way, as a lot of people, especially those from Southeast Asia and Middle East also may become afraid and discouraged when faced with the United States, or foreigners in general. That is one form of success Soft Power Diplomacy.

## 1.3. Globalization

Actually, globalization should primarily be regarded as being about the interdependence of societies on a world scale, about current links and those that can be developed globally between individuals, communities, nations and organizations.

The mass media (such as television, music), and in particular the new media (such as the Internet) are important tools in the process of spreading the global culture to young people around the world and conversely can be used as a platform for the

networking of resistance. Researchers from Denmark, France and Israel found that as a result of the media-induced processes of globalization, young people in those countries have a preference for transnational fiction, and movie material (particularly American 'soapies') and also a new sense of transnational social space provided by the Internet [9].

## 2. Finding and Discussion

### 2.1. The Young People and Globalization

Young people are most directly affected by globalization and therefore central to current debates on identity. They are experiencing globalization daily through employment patterns, the friendship groups they develop, their usage of the internet (particularly for social networking) and wider cultural influences on their lifestyles.

One of the paradoxes of the Western cultural influences on the media is the tension between the homogenizing effect of a dominant culture on diverse cultures, and the inherent individualism at the center of the Western cultural model. This creates a push and pulls effect of 'look alike' teenage role models masking the ongoing struggle for individuality and identity, which is at the core of adolescence. However, when the individualism that is being promoted in tandem with the global media images of Western lifestyles is blended with the aggressive market-driven consumerism, it can be a rather toxic brew for youth living in poverty unable to attain the image. Sonia Livingstone describes this process where modern marketing directs popular culture, transforming the global citizen (or viewer) into the consumer. She adds "whether conceived optimistically or pessimistically, the processes of globalization of media and culture are seen by many as the means par excellence by which such social changes are effected".

### 2.2. Soft Power Diplomacy in a Globalized World

As a political process used by government to ensure their interests could be obtained, the development of diplomacy is now widely seen in our daily life. Diplomacy is not only a one-on-one talk in five stars restaurant. The simplest example is when governments use culture as a tool of their diplomacy program. The cultural application of soft power diplomacy has become a trend seen by government as a more effective and efficient to achieve their goals. Moreover, the action of soft power diplomacy is usually followed by the export of national values that it can even be considered as cultural imperialism that invades local cultures and lifestyles, deepens the insecurities of

indigenous identities and contributes to the erosion of national cultures and historical traditions [9].

### 2.3. Media Literacy as a Solution

Media literacy can be considered as the process of accessing, critically analyzing media messages, and creating messages using media tools. A lot of people view that media literacy facilitates understanding of communication technology, the message code, message generated, message selection, interpretation, and impact of the message on the receiver. Furthermore, media literacy can become very important, as by now it is a set of perspectives to interpret the meaning of the mediated messages so that it can provide clues about how to treat the media – in the context of this paper, this refers to the online social media. The freedom of delivering messages on social media should be appropriately filtered to preserve the societal norms and values, especially so for teenagers who are still in search of identity and therefore a prime target for terrorist groups' recruitment via the social media. Media literacy will potentially help young social media users better interpret the messages.

In addition to the existence of these objectives, there are different views between practitioners of media education / media literacy. The first view is called protectionist group, who state that media education/media literacy is intended to protect citizens as from the negative effects of mass media. The second view, called preparations, states that media literacy is an effort to prepare residents to live in a world that is crowded, and because of that, citizens in general need to be provided with the competence to interpret the media messages to be able to benefit from the presence of the mass media.

Theoretically, there are two main things that can be done to develop social media literacy:

#### a. Consciously manage the flow of information

It is clear that no one is able to withstand the flow of information in this Internet era. One of the characteristics distinguishing social media from media is consumers' freedom of access to information, in this case social media users choose what they want. In contrast to conventional media, such as news on television, for example, society must receive the news aired by a television news network. Meanwhile, in social media, the account owner can choose to read the information he wants, and he can choose which information he will share. However, it is not easy, because it relates to the personal awareness of each social media user.

#### b. Actively participate in determining the regulations in the use of communication technology to minimize the abuse of human rights and protect freedom of speech.

With easy access to social media, of course, the information flow can work very quickly and massively. Any information – for instance, score of a football game, celebrity wedding video, video of terrorist bombings, articles about teen relationships – can quickly spread and be shared online. Prevention is needed on such information. However, we then find out if the information just presented is correct or not, whether or not the chronology of events matches reality, or the meaning of the information recently accessed. Social media is not limited to websites and applications outstanding imports. Local online discussion forum in Indonesia like Kaskus (*kaskus.co.id*) also quite suitable for questioning/clarifying and issues spread through media. Because in the forums at Kaskus, there is a moderator in charge of organizing the discussions, remove the comments irresponsible, or even refuse users who violate regulations.

More importantly, like all great movements, media literacy must begin at the grass-roots as parents, educators and concerned citizens began to see that if media was to play a pivotal role as children's teacher, that children would still need to have a way of filtering through the messages so that wise choices, in accordance with acceptable community norms, are possible. Formal education, not just censorship or control, is the avenue to help young people understand their choices and to help question the values represented by the media.

### 3. Conclusion

While globalization has benefited international society, prevention against the glut of information on social media is still needed for the sake of youth's mind because young persons, especially students, have immense curiosity towards all kinds of new information. There will be no problem if all information disseminated is suitable for youth. However, since international news also has content like terrorism, hedonistic lifestyle, and moreover a certain culture's soft power diplomacy which can affect juvenile's mind easily, a certain effort has to be done to ensure that all the content and information accessible by young people is safe. There is no mechanism to ensure that another action has to be done by empowering the youth itself. Media literacy can become a suitable solution towards this affair, since it will make young people aware of the effect of social media and worldwide information caused by globalization. By doing so, the society can consciously manage the flow of information and actively participate in determining the regulations in the use of communication technology, in order to prevent the contamination of our youth's mind from bad content. Hence, it is very important to make sure that the young generation is fully capable to filter and separate the information which is delivered to them by empowering them with media literacy.

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