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## **THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INFORMATION LITERACY AMONG ADOLESCENTS: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This literature review analyzes the impact of social media on adolescents' information literacy in the digital era. The findings indicate a strong relationship between social media information literacy (SMIL), emotional intelligence, and adolescents' ability to critically evaluate information. The review also highlights digital literacy disparities influenced by socioeconomic factors and emphasizes the effectiveness of structured media literacy education. Strengthening SMIL through collaborative educational efforts is essential to support adolescents' well-being and responsible digital engagement.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape of the 21st century, adolescents are among the most active users of social media platforms, which increasingly function as primary sources of information, communication, and social interaction. Beyond entertainment, social media has become a central arena where adolescents encounter news, opinions, and knowledge claims, making the ability to critically evaluate information within these platforms an essential competence. This condition highlights the growing importance of Social Media Information Literacy (SMIL) as a specific dimension of digital literacy that focuses on information practices embedded in social media environments.

Recent scholarship emphasizes that digital literacy can no longer be understood solely as technical proficiency. Contemporary definitions frame digital literacy as a set of cognitive, social, and ethical competencies that enable individuals to critically access,

evaluate, create, and communicate information using digital technologies (Ng, 2012; van Laar et al., 2018). More specifically, SMIL refers to adolescents' capacity to assess credibility, recognize misinformation, understand algorithms, and engage responsibly with user-generated content on social media platforms (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017; Guess et al., 2020). **Recent studies emphasize that adolescents often struggle with civic reasoning in social media environments (McGrew et al., 2017) and have limited understanding of how their personal data is used by platforms (Pangrazio & Selwyn, 2019).** These competencies are increasingly crucial given the rapid circulation of misinformation and emotionally charged content across social networking sites.

Empirical studies published after 2018 indicate that adolescents' exposure to social media without adequate SMIL skills may heighten vulnerability to misinformation, emotional manipulation, and polarized discourse (Nyhan & Reifler, 2019; Guess et al., 2020). Conversely, adolescents with higher levels of SMIL demonstrate stronger critical thinking, emotional regulation, and responsible online participation (Yolcu, 2023). However, research also shows persistent disparities in social media literacy skills, often shaped by socioeconomic background, educational access, and instructional support (OECD, 2021).

Despite the expanding body of research on digital literacy, a clear research gap remains. Many previous literature reviews and empirical studies continue to conceptualize digital literacy in broad terms, without explicitly isolating social media information literacy as a distinct analytical focus. As a result, the specific mechanisms through which social media environments influence adolescents' information evaluation, emotional responses, and social behavior remain underexplored. Moreover, existing studies are often fragmented, examining isolated outcomes rather than synthesizing findings across emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions.

Addressing this gap, the present literature review focuses explicitly on Social Media Information Literacy (SMIL) among adolescents, synthesizing recent empirical and theoretical studies published predominantly after 2018. By narrowing the scope from general digital literacy to SMIL, this review aims to clarify how social media-specific information practices shape adolescents' critical engagement, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility. The findings are expected to inform educators, parents, and policymakers regarding the integration of SMIL-oriented media literacy education into formal and informal learning contexts.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a narrative literature review with a structured screening approach to examine research on Social Media Information Literacy (SMIL) among adolescents. This approach was selected to allow thematic synthesis of recent empirical and theoretical studies while maintaining transparency in the article selection process. The PRISMA framework (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) was used as a guiding reference to organize the stages of identification, screening, and eligibility, without claiming the methodological rigor of a full systematic literature review.

Data were collected from four academic databases, namely Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, and ResearchGate, to capture relevant studies from the fields of education, information science, and media studies. The literature search was limited to journal articles published between 2022 and 2024 to ensure the use of recent and relevant sources. The search employed combinations of keywords such as “social media information literacy,” “digital literacy,” “adolescents,” and “social media,” using Boolean operators to refine the results and improve relevance.

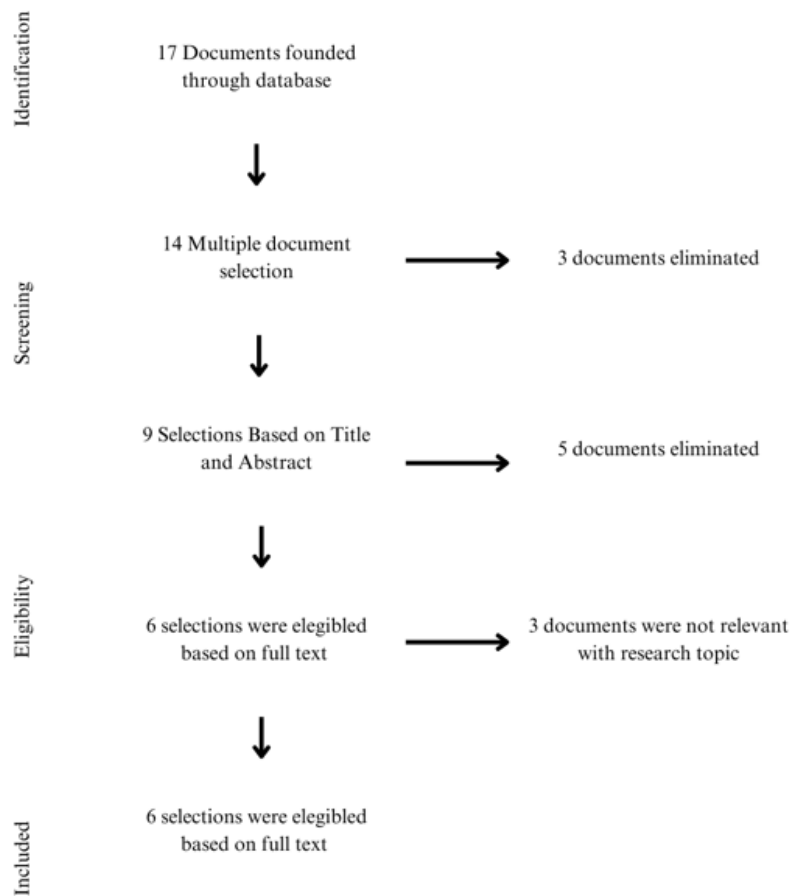
**Table 1.** Data Research Strategy

No.	Database	Keyword
1	Google Scholar	"digital literacy," "adolescents," "academic performance," "social behavior," and "mental health." Boolean operators (AND, OR) will refine the search results to ensure relevance.
2	ERIC	"digital literacy," "adolescents," "academic performance," "social behavior," and "mental health."
3	JSTOR	"digital literacy," "adolescents," "academic performance," "social behavior," and "mental health."
4	Reasearchgate	"digital literacy," "adolescents," "academic performance," "social behavior," and "mental health."

Source: Researcher’s Data Selection

The model or strategy used is PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) which is used for systematic literature studies based on research by Sinha et al., (2024). This method technically collects relevant documents and eliminates those that do not fall within the scope of the topic.

**Figure 1.** Data Selection Process with PRISMA Model



Source: Researcher's Data Selection

Numerous papers or studies that are pertinent to the subject matter were discovered by researchers after searching through multiple databases. The period covered by these studies is 2022–2024. Of the 17 journal articles that researchers gathered, only 6 are suitable for comparison and analysis.

## RESULT

Based on the literature review, a total of 13 relevant scientific articles were identified and analyzed. These articles form the empirical basis for examining the relationship between social media use and information literacy among adolescents. An overview of the selected studies, including authors, research methods, samples, and key findings, is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Data from Previous Research

No.	Title	Author	Year	Result
1	The Impact of Social Media Information Literacy on Malaysian Youth's Emotional Intelligence	Abdul Rahman Abdul Manaf & Mohammad Rezal Hamzah	2023	there is a significant correlation between SMIL and emotional intelligence, suggesting that improved literacy can enhance adolescents' ability to navigate online information effectively.
2	Instagram and Digital Media Literacy among Teenagers in Bandung	Rully Khairul Anwar, Ute Lies Siti Khadijah, Edwin Rizal	2023	students can analyze real and hoax information and maintain ethical standards while engaging with content on Instagram.
3	The Impact of Social Media Use on Adolescents	Fadhiul Pahlevi Hidayat & Faizal Hamzah Lubis	2022	social media can serve as a medium for learning and acquiring knowledge while also highlighting potential negative impacts on adolescents' mental health and information processing skills.
4	Youth and Media Literacy: Understanding Social Media's Influence on Information Consumption	Ahmad Syakir Salman Abdul Latif, Dzaa Imma, Wan Anis Aqilah Mrgat Zambri, Muhammad Nabihan Abu Bakar	2024	media literacy impacts social media use and influences how students process information through social media platforms. It emphasizes the importance of developing critical evaluation skills among adolescents.
5	Adolescent Social Media Information Literacy Outside of School	Christine Wusylko, Shelby Boehm, Kara Dawson, Angela Kohnen	2022	Adolescent use of social media outside of school environments and the significance of their information literacy practices, with an emphasis on how these practices affect their information consuming habits, have a significant impact on students' information literacy
6	Intensity of Social Media Use and Literacy Skills in Students: A Study in The Context of Learning, Entertainment, and Communication	Saiful Fallah, Ilham Ilham, Hartono Hartono, Udi Utomo, Syahrul Syah Sinaga	2024	The relevance of using social media as an educational tool is highlighted by the considerable link found between students reading skills and the intensity of their use of social media for communication and learning.

Source: Researcher's Processed Data

The synthesis of findings indicates that social media information literacy (SMIL) is significantly associated with various aspects of adolescent development. A quantitative study by Abdul Manaf et al. (2023) reported a strong positive correlation between SMIL and emotional intelligence (EQ) among Malaysian adolescents. Involving 241 students

and employing descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, the study demonstrated that higher levels of SMIL are linked to improved emotional regulation and interpersonal competencies, which are essential for navigating both online and offline social interactions.

The reviewed literature also reveals substantial variation in adolescents' levels of digital literacy. van Deursen and van Dijk (2019) found that disparities in digital skills are closely related to socioeconomic factors and may lead to unequal outcomes in both online engagement and offline life opportunities. These findings indicate that adolescents with lower levels of digital literacy are more vulnerable to misinformation and limited participation in digital environments.

In addition, a pilot study focusing on media literacy training reported a significant increase in knowledge and behavioral intentions among female students after participating in an interactive educational program. The results showed notable improvements in participants' ability to critically evaluate media messages, suggesting that structured media literacy interventions can effectively enhance adolescents' critical engagement with social media content.

Qualitative evidence further supports these findings. A study examining adolescents' experiences with social media personalization found that increased awareness of algorithmic processes and content curation mechanisms contributed to higher levels of information literacy. Adolescents who understood how social media platforms shape information exposure demonstrated stronger critical thinking skills and greater caution in consuming and sharing information.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings from these studies collectively underscore the critical role of social media information literacy in shaping adolescents' ability to process information effectively. As social media continues to be a dominant source of information for young people, enhancing their digital literacy skills is essential for fostering informed decision-making and emotional resilience. The positive correlation between SMIL and emotional intelligence found in Abdul Manaf et al.'s study suggests that equipping adolescents with the tools to critically assess information can lead to better emotional regulation and interpersonal skills. This is particularly relevant in an age where misinformation is

rampant, as adolescents who are more literate in navigating social media are likely to develop healthier online behaviors and relationships.

In addition to emotional and interpersonal dimensions, social media information literacy also plays a crucial role in adolescents' cognitive development, particularly in their ability to evaluate information credibility, recognize bias, and distinguish between factual content and misinformation. Adolescents with higher levels of SMIL are better positioned to engage in reflective thinking and to avoid passive consumption of digital content. This includes awareness of how personal data shapes their online experiences (Pangrazio & Selwyn, 2019) and the ability to employ civic reasoning strategies when encountering questionable content (McGrew et al., 2017). This cognitive competence is increasingly important as algorithm-driven platforms tend to amplify sensational or misleading information, which can negatively influence adolescents' perceptions and decision-making processes.

Additionally, the disparities in digital literacy highlighted by van Deursen & van Dijk (2019) reveal a pressing need for educational institutions to implement comprehensive digital literacy programs. Such initiatives should aim not only to improve technical skills but also to foster critical thinking and ethical considerations when engaging with online content. The effectiveness of media literacy training programs, as demonstrated by the pilot study on female students, reinforces the notion that structured educational interventions can lead to meaningful improvements in knowledge and behavioral intentions regarding media consumption. These findings advocate for integrating media literacy into school curricula to prepare adolescents for the challenges posed by digital environments.

Moreover, addressing digital literacy disparities requires a holistic approach that considers socioeconomic background, access to digital resources, and varying levels of parental and institutional support. Without targeted interventions, unequal digital literacy competencies may further widen social inequalities, limiting adolescents' opportunities for academic success and meaningful participation in digital society. Therefore, collaborative efforts involving schools, families, and policymakers are essential to ensure equitable access to digital literacy education.

In conclusion, as adolescents increasingly rely on social media for information, it is imperative that educators, parents, and policymakers prioritize enhancing social media information literacy. By doing so, we can empower young individuals to become

discerning consumers of information, capable of navigating the complexities of today's digital landscape while fostering their emotional intelligence and overall well-being.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This literature review demonstrates that social media information literacy (SMIL) plays a pivotal role in adolescents' ability to critically process and evaluate information in digital environments. The reviewed studies consistently show a positive relationship between SMIL and emotional intelligence, indicating that higher levels of information literacy contribute to improved emotional regulation and interpersonal skills. These findings highlight that strengthening SMIL is essential not only for combating misinformation but also for supporting adolescents' socio-emotional development in an increasingly digital society.

The review also reveals significant disparities in digital literacy among adolescents, often shaped by socioeconomic conditions. Such inequalities may intensify adolescents' vulnerability to misinformation and limit their participation in digital spaces. Although structured media literacy education has been shown to enhance critical engagement with media content, this study is limited by its reliance on secondary data, variations in research designs, and the relatively limited number of empirical studies focusing specifically on SMIL across diverse cultural contexts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions integrate comprehensive social media information literacy programs into school curricula, emphasizing critical thinking, ethical awareness, and responsible digital engagement. Policymakers and educators should also prioritize equitable access to digital literacy resources to address existing disparities among adolescents from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

For future research, longitudinal and mixed-method studies are needed to examine the long-term impact of SMIL on adolescents' cognitive, emotional, and social development. Further investigations should explore cross-cultural contexts and analyze the influence of specific social media platforms and algorithmic features on information literacy practices. Such efforts will contribute to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of SMIL and its implications for adolescent well-being.

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