



## **Instagram and Digital Media Literacy among Teenagers in Bandung**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In a world with the rapid advancement of digital media, the ability to manage media content is crucial. The rising influence of social media, particularly from the millennial generation, has significantly transformed how people access information. However, challenges remain; many platforms, such as Instagram, often contain misleading and provocative content. This research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Yasipa in Bandung City. It employed a qualitative approach with a five-month case study. The data was collected through interviews and observations to assess how well adolescents acknowledge accurate information on Instagram. The study results show that students can access the features available on Instagram, know and understand the benefits of Instagram, analyze real and hoax information, maintain the ethics of leaving comments on Instagram, and look for verified sources. Therefore, they can analyze what appeals to them, what information is shareable, and what contents require actions. They can produce particular photos, images, videos, and information so that students become more creative when using Instagram.

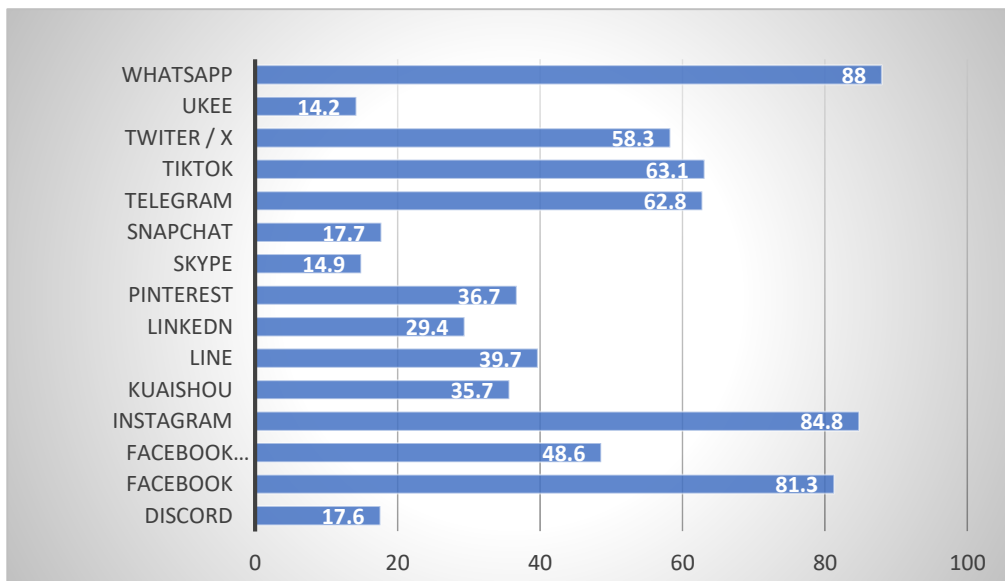
**Keywords:** digital literacy, Instagram, students.

## INTRODUCTION

Globalization, in which digital technology is widespread, has accelerated the generation and dissemination of information (Rachman, 2019). Traditional media remain relevant in the digital age, yet millennials' engagement has decreased (Nurlina et al. 2019). Millennials generally rely only on social media and do not drop in the news (Afandi et al. 2019). Misinformation stories are difficult to quantify and investigate on social media (Muhtarom & Danuri, 2019). Due to its unfettered nature, social media spreads untruths. Millennials need to evaluate and correct their media use to avoid erroneous and inflammatory information (Ariska & Rosana, 2020).

A 2019-2020 survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2022) found that 91% of Indonesians aged 15-19 use the Internet. This is closely followed by the 20-24 age group with an 88.5% usage rate. People spend 51.5% of their online time on social media. About 32.9% of internet usage is for communication. This means that young Indonesians make up a large portion of the population and neglect the Internet and social media. The younger generation can easily access, share, and participate in entertainment and educational activities online (Marsuki et al. 2020).

**Table 1. Social Media Platforms Widely Used in Indonesia in 2022**



(Source: <https://andi.link/hootsuite-we-are-social-indonesian-digital-report-2022/>)

A recurring problem arises from the rapid dissemination of information through the aforementioned media platforms, as individuals often encounter confusion and face the challenge of effectively sorting, distinguishing, and applying the information they receive (Efendi & Nurjanah, 2019). The constant evolution of social media is closely related to the problem at hand, especially the spread of false information commonly referred to as fake news or hoaxes. The spread of fake news is attributed to the limited level of digital media literacy among the Indonesian population (Sugiono, 2020)

The March 2016 Central Connecticut State College study, "World's Most Literate Nations Ranked," ranked Indonesia 60th out of 61 countries in literacy (Miller & McKenna, 2016). Limited digital media literacy causes the easy spread of fake news because people only read headlines without content verification. Thus, unverified information spreads fast. Today, anyone can spread news or information, so this behavior leads to misinformation (Poluakan et al. 2020).

Potter (2004) says media literacy helps consumers understand media. Low media literacy makes news difficult to understand. Those with low media literacy passively accept media narratives. They rarely question news and information's consequences and interpretations (Mrisho & Dominic, 2023). Verifying news and detecting media bias are difficult. They may also struggle with difficult topics, irony, and satire. Media messages are accepted without question. Many development issues require digital media literacy, especially the ability to understand, analyze, evaluate, and communicate media content (Budiana et al. 2020).

Education helps people navigate and evaluate media to find what they need. Digital media literacy is important for many reasons. Despite extensive platform use, many users are unaware of the potential consequences of their digital behavior. Digital media can change people's behavior dramatically and subtly. Digital media affects how people and society process news and information. These cognitive processes significantly affect media use and its effects (Schmälzle & Huskey, 2023). Limited engagement by colleges and schools in community media literacy initiatives is a major factor.

The audience's active tendency to obtain information from different media sources makes media literacy important. Few people understand the media's impact. Media also affects viewers' behavior implicitly and explicitly. Different viewers use and understand media content based on their cognitive processing levels.

This study selects Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Yasipa in Bandung to examine teenagers' digital media literacy, particularly in Instagram use, due to several key reasons. Firstly, the students' demography at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Yasipa represents a significant segment of social media users. Secondly, the cultural and

educational environment of a private high school (madrasah aliyah swasta) provides a unique perspective on how religious and social values influence digital media literacy. Additionally, Bandung, as an urban area, presents an ideal setting to explore the impact of social media trends on youth. The choice of this private school allows the study to delve into the nuances of digital literacy in a context that blends traditional educational values with modern social media dynamics.

This study uses many relevant studies to choose its topics. [Nurrahmi & Syam \(2020\)](#) and [Parhan et al. \(2021\)](#) studied college student hoaxes on social media and examine communication ethics among Bandung City students in social media and its relation to the hoax phenomenon from an Islamic perspective. Meanwhile, [Kwanda and Lin \(2020\)](#) studied fake news. [Elvinaro and Syarif \(2022\)](#), [Mamun et al. \(2020\)](#), [Posetti and Matthews \(2018\)](#), [Rina et al. \(2020\)](#), [Rusydiyah \(2020\)](#), and [Suherman et al. \(2020\)](#) study literacy programs. Media literacy research has also illuminated how the COVID-19 pandemic affected digital media ([Kalanjati et al. 2022](#)). Few studies have examined media literacy in adolescents, especially high schoolers. The problem is that adolescents and students rarely use media as a social tool. Contrary to popular belief, adolescents are not passive social media users. [Faizah et al. \(2021\)](#) report a rise in the social media content creation among teenagers. This study fills a knowledge gap.

This research focuses on media literacy, so it incorporates relevant literature. [Yue et al. \(2019\)](#) link media literacy to English, combining media as a message channel and "literacy" as text interpretation proficiency. Media literacy involves interpreting and assessing mass communication media content and messages. [Baran and Dennis \(2011\)](#) define media literacy as a variety of methods for engaging with media and communicating and receiving messages.

Media literacy is a skill that can be developed in environments where people may not understand media in all contexts, times, and forms. It requires deliberate instruction and application. Everyone is not born with media literacy ([Astuti, 2021](#); [Hermanto & Putri, 2021](#); [Sardjono et al. 2021](#)). It requires competence, which includes recognizing, acquiring, managing, integrating, evaluating, investigating, and combining digital resources, as well as creating new knowledge, creating creative works, and communicating via digital platforms ([Dunn & Hazzard, 2019](#); [Estacio et al. 2019](#); [Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021](#); [Smith & Magnani, 2019](#)). Work with people in different life situations to facilitate social engagement and express concerns ([Martzoukou, 2021](#)).

[Livingstone \(2004\)](#) defines media literacy as access, comprehension, analysis, and production. Access is the technical ability to get media. Comprehension and interpretation means surveying media codes and symbols. Analysis connects codes and symbols within a context. Production involves creating media in sound, sound-image, writing, and combinations of these using new media technologies. The second half of the 20th century saw the rise of

digital, computer, and network information and communication technologies, known as "new media" (Kanniainen et al. 2019; Nouri et al. 2020). New media can be edited, interconnected, have high information density, be interactive, and use user-generated content. Internet content written by non-corporate individuals is called user-generated content. This phenomenon allows all Internet users to participate, breaking the exclusive control of media content by established interests (Martzoukou et al. 2020). The Internet, websites, computer multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMs, and DVDs are all considered new media. Digital media includes audio, visual, dynamic, photographic, and written information. Vizcaíno-Verdú et al. (2019) argue that media convergence in digital media is inevitable.

Carr and Hayes (2015) define social media as online platforms where people can present themselves live or delayed to a large or small audience. User content creation and engagement perceptions make these platforms valuable. Among society, social media platforms are popular because they allow users to interact by linking to websites, information sources, and other users.

Instagram lets users share photos and videos on their phones. It can take photos and videos, apply digital filters to improve appearance, and use social media (Wiana, 2019). The name "Instagram" is the combination of the words "instant" and "telegram." The term "instant" in "instant photo" evokes immediacy, like a Polaroid camera, which was popular at the time. Instagram shows photos instantly, like Polaroid photos, in addition to their intended meaning. A "telegram" is a fast way to send information. Instagram allows users to quickly share information by uploading photos via the Internet.

At this stage, human development pivots from childhood to maturity. Kenny (2019) and Sikora (2019) stated that this phase of development is common. This time marks psychological growth and change. Gentile, Lynch, Linder, and Walsh (2004) and Wade et al. (2020) found that the transformation period occurs between 2010 and 2022.

The study was conducted in Bandung from August 2021 to January 2022. With a constructivist approach, the researcher considered how multiple factors shape digital media literacy. The researcher explores the subject's social dynamics using well-established facts and current conditions (Silverman, 2015). Cultural background, personal experiences, and the historical context of the research subject are important to society. Willis et al. (2009) emphasize that constructivism holds that human creation or development defines reality. Human cognitive development is essential to reality. Active and participatory researchers create a harmonious relationship with their study objects, leading to revolutionary discoveries and important contributions.

The author extensively studies youth digital media literacy using a qualitative

case study method. Yin (1994) defines a case study as an empirical investigation that integrates multiple data sources to blur the phenomenon-environment boundaries.

This mixed-methods study collected data through observation, interviews, and documentation. It involved social media users, literacy advocates, and 10 students. Students in these grades use Instagram frequently. This study analyzes data from interviews, field notes, and other sources using a systematic approach. The goal is to make information more accessible and share findings (Flick, 2018). This study began with a systematic analysis of the data collected from interview, observation, and documentation. We then classified them into patterns, categories, and descriptive units. A consensus was reached, resulting in conclusions that can be shared in this written discourse.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Instagram's Impact on Youth Media Literacy**

The research found that students start using Instagram between ages 11 and 15, during which they required internet and social media skills. Instagram's purposes include educating about social media, inspiration, trend-following, and sharing experiences. While user-friendly, Instagram has its downsides, including potential misuse by illegitimate users. It enables friendship and information sharing based on interests, but crime on the platform is an issue. Instagram's effectiveness as an advertising medium is notable, but there's a risk of photo misuse. Research indicates that young students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Yasipa in Bandung City are proficient Instagram users.

The study highlights the participants' ability to share their Instagram experiences, detailing the platform's various features. Instagram story allows for longer posts or infrequent reminders. The search function aids in finding favorite items and information. Instagram also supports real-time video chats and group viewing. IGTV enables uploading of extended videos, akin to YouTube. The Save feature allows users to store appealing and useful content, easily accessible without re-searching. The Send Messages option facilitates communication and requests. Introduced in 2020, the Shopping feature permits direct purchasing on Instagram, a boon for those with limited device storage. Live Broadcasting lets users stream events or information to their entire fan base or selected segments. According to a December 2021 AWP interview, the "Close Friends" feature provides a secure way to share stories with trusted individuals, protecting user content.

The research shows that the students of Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Yasipa in Bandung understand Instagram. They know Instagram improves their lives. People like, share, and comment on photos, engaging and entertaining videos, educational data, clarifications of unclear information, credible accounts, and discouragement of false information. They appreciate and support statements

about future education. Further, I examine clothes. Religious knowledge and Islamic Da'wah are involved. The next section discusses healthy eating guidelines. The January 2022 interview covers skincare and health product selection.

By acknowledging the real and fake Instagram content, consumers understand its authenticity. They check account details, look for verified or official accounts, and trust credibility cues. Credible sources on the page help moderate comments and avoid exaggerations. Examining data, video, dialogue, and digital traces, such as editing old footage to appear current, can disprove a false claim.

Students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta YASIPA in Bandung City can analyze Instagram content. Post likes, shares, and comments show cognitive abilities, preferences, and needs. They check the content before liking, sharing, or commenting. Media use and awareness varied. Participants used media well and recognized its benefits for them. Other informants gave brief media-use answers that needed further analysis. Personal Instagram experiences shape knowledge, understanding, and reasoning.

“Media literacy among teenagers varies in urban and rural areas, which is often caused by access differences. It's crucial to teach media literacy from a young age and include it in school curriculums. This way, teenagers can gain media knowledge early and learn to use media more wisely.” (Ajeng Sumiati, interviewed, December 18 2022).

### **Analyzing and Creating Content on Instagram**

The ability to generate information is another factor. Young people post images, write visual and audiovisual content, and create engaging photos, videos, and other information on Instagram. Young people post photos, videos, and personal information online. There are also Instagram users who rarely post photos, videos, or personal information. However, Instagram users show off their artistic talent by posting photos, graphics, and videos.

Media literacy activist Siti Rohmah recommends involving parents in teaching youth social media literacy. This is critical because 5th graders are already using Instagram. That means a 10th grader has been using Instagram for five years.

Interview responses show that the informant has mastered Instagram, according to the research. They have mastered the platform, understand its benefits, organize and curate content, and show creative triumphs on Instagram.

“Teenagers should understand that they control whether technology is beneficial or harmful. They need to be smart and critical when using media, realizing that it's just a tool. Intelligence, critical thinking, and wisdom are essential traits for them as users.” (Siti Rohmah, interviewed, December 28 2022).

The study found that teens can use Instagram features more creatively to create photos, drawings, videos, and targeted information. The students of Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Yasipa in Bandung are media literate, according to interviews and data analysis. Indonesians, especially youth, need parental, educational, and government support. Because they are more likely to see dangerous content, especially on social media, their behavior may change (Astuti, 2021). This project, which educates and supports internet users, especially social media users, is crucial due to the need for digital literacy. Social engagement today requires digital literacy as much as other academic subjects. Millennials who use technology think differently (Jin et al. 2020).

### **Challenges and Opportunities in Digital Literacy**

Media literacy addresses the widespread belief that mass media is harmful. People must have the skills, knowledge, awareness, and abilities to critically analyze these messages. Message evaluation involves selecting, interpreting, and assessing the received messages (Ramírez-Montoya et al. 2021).

Digital literacy, UNESCO defines, involves the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to locate, assess, utilize, create, and disseminate content or information, considering cognitive, ethical, social-emotional, and technical factors. Buckingham (2019) sees it as the know-how, attitude, and capacity to employ digital tools and resources for discovering, accessing, organizing, integrating, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing digital information, along with the creation and sharing of new knowledge and media in real-life contexts for societal betterment. It demands reflection throughout the process. Martin describes it as the comprehension, preparation, and application of digital tools and resources for finding, accessing, organizing, integrating, evaluating, analyzing, and summarizing digital content, encompassing new knowledge, expressive media, and digital communication to enhance social engagement and procedural development in specific life situations.

Technology for daily communication must be used responsibly. Fake news, misleading content, provocative language, and radical beliefs in the media can make the digital environment harder to understand. Sharing information, securing news, and communicating effectively are digital literacy skills. Reddy et al. (2020) state that today's digital content requires ethical considerations in creation, collaboration, and communication. Digital literacy education requires parents, teachers, schools, and government involvement. They should create rules, instructions, and training that promote critical and creative thinking to create a social order that fosters personal growth and community (Buchanan, 2020).

The study suggested that empowering people to access, understand, analyze, and produce media can reduce the risks of social media and public power consolidation. Data analysis and interviews (Haider & Sundin, 2019; Juhaňák et al.



2019) support this claim. This strategy aims to improve information access in this study and teach people how to use Instagram productively. This process requires platform access and media analysis skills. People will also be encouraged to become Instagram experts by learning the platform's ins and outs, using its creative potential, and creating high-quality content.

“Teenagers have great access to social media like Instagram, but what's lacking is their understanding and ability to analyze. These skills are crucial in determining whether social media will improve their lives or lead to a moral decline, especially among millennials. It's not only a personal issue; the whole community, government, families, schools, and religious institutions must step in to guide and safeguard digital trends today.” (Rahmat Maulana, interviewed, January 11 2023).

This finding highlights the need for adequate understanding and analytical skills to increase young people's happiness in social interactions and media use. However, it is also obvious that their current level of knowledge and testing is inadequate.

It's unfortunate that while today's youth are rapidly adopting social media, their maturity does not go along with the pace. Media literacy encompasses three key aspects: technical skills, critical thinking, and ethical understanding. The millennial and Gen Z populations have excelled in their technical abilities, skillfully operating and even personalizing their digital devices.” (Rahmat Maulana, interviewed, January 11 2023).

The ability of users to interpret and evaluate material they receive or post is often overlooked (Anthonysamy et al. 2020). When people cannot critically evaluate or interact with material, incorrect information is spread or verbal violence occurs (Cheng et al. 2020). Another consideration is moral maturity. Most agree that online communication still needs to improve, especially in promoting polite and respectful dialogue. Because there is no face-to-face interaction, youth may feel more comfortable speaking their minds, but different people understand what they say (Bhatt & MacKenzie, 2019). Social media is personal, but adolescents must realize it works like a public forum.

Teens need consistent coaching to improve media literacy. Students need to learn to think critically and evaluate media, especially Instagram. We can protect young people from media harm and keep them out of danger this way. Thus, community involvement is required for media literacy (Karekla et al. 2019). The public, especially young people, has a critical view of media content, making them less susceptible to manipulation and exploitation by media corporations with anti-social agendas.



Figure 1. The Use of Instagram Story feature in various activities at the Mas Yasipa (Source: *osis\_mayasipa* Instagram account)

Teens and adolescents are the focus of media literacy programs because of their formative media use. 'Teens' naivety makes them easy targets for media messages, and they're more likely to adopt media-driven ideas like lifestyle trends, slang, global perspectives, tranquility, and topicality. As Pérez-Escoda et al. (2019) demonstrate, media influence affects everyone, so media literacy is crucial, especially for youth and adolescents, especially young Instagram users.

“Instagram is popular among teenagers who appreciate its focus on visuals. It allows them to express themselves and showcase their self-image through pictures. While this often reflects a cantered, pleasure-seeking lifestyle. Despite this trend, a growing number of teenagers are utilizing Instagram as a space for constructive aspirations and innovations, some of which hold economic potential.” (Rahmat Maulana, interviewed, January 11 2023).

According to De Paor & Heravi (2020), digitization will make the Internet the main information hub, replacing newspapers, magazines, tabloids, radio, television, the telephone, and computers. Jenkins (2009) claims that traditional media users are more introverted than new media users. As new media users share their content across platforms, more and different information becomes available to everyone.

The computer connects the general public to the virtual world, bridging mobility and interaction. Computer users can now send messages due to faster connections. Users can ignore physical and temporal barriers when sending and receiving messages in real time (Zeike et al. 2019). The Internet and related digital technologies offer greater bandwidth and the ability to transmit complex formats faster and with fewer resources.

Media, like any other media, affect society and youth positively and negatively. Between 12 and 18, many mental and emotional changes allow people

to think more rationally and methodically. Parents and educators must supervise adolescents to help them enjoy digital media without putting concern on the risks. Each person has an online persona that decides how much of their private life to share. This makes people feel more comfortable being themselves online (Nouri et al. 2019).

Web 4.0 infrastructure has transformed interpersonal communication. Blogs, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms allow users to publish and share UGC (Anwar et al. 2020; Polizzi, 2020). Text, photos, audio, and video are used to share ideas, concepts, and information. Media convergence in new media theory emphasizes media's all-encompassing nature, which is now more accessible and inclusive, increasing perceptual acuity. Simply clicking "Like" or "Subscribe" gives users full control over media channels.

New media theory emerged from computer, media, and communications innovations. The rise of online information and users has complicated the media. Machleid et al. (2020) attribute this to technological advancement and social determinism. Potter (2004) defines media literacy as a "frame of reference" for media understanding. How we view knowledge depends on how we organize it. Materials and resources are needed to build knowledge. Knowledge and skills are tools, while media and life events provide materials. Active use is when people comprehend and respond to a message. Potter (2004) defines media literacy as "mental tools for understanding media content."

Livingstone (2004) proposes four media literacy components based on his research. Proactive social strategy comes first. It requires persistently seeking innovative and high-quality media opportunities. As the desire to integrate learning, engagement, and culture through digital media grows, the social environment must be considered. The ability to connect symbolic language writings is an analytical skill. Users must be motivated and understand cultural norms. The analytical framework includes media agency, category, technology, language, target audience, and representation. The technique has six phases, starting with analysis, which is useful in new media. Next, evaluate the results. Analyzing political, economic, social, and cultural context and critically evaluating a lot of information are key content evaluation skills. People and organizations create content because of their expertise. Professional content creators communicate through culture and social media.

Tech has democratized content production by making platforms easy to use and HD cameras that take high-quality photos. In a world of modern conveniences, content producers must find ways to connect with their readers or viewers to create a productive environment. Information overload plagues modern society due to media saturation (McGuinness & Fulton, 2019). The digital world is only one tool for progress. Media literacy encourages creative, thoughtful,

and productive engagement despite the abundance of digital content (Lee, 2020). People should use social media with a considerate and safe attitude. ICT-enabled media consumption is essential to digital literacy.

Bawden (2006) defines digital literacy as data structure, presentation, visualization, and evaluation. To complicate matters, digital literacy involves diverse skills and knowledge (Reisoğlu & Çebi, 2020; Solomon & Rudin, 2020). Media and digital literacy require critical thinking. Successful media message development is essential in today's complex communication environments. Media literacy in the digital age includes many foundational skills and knowledge.

A comprehensive digital literacy curriculum is the answer. Reading and careful media use improve digital literacy. Thus, digital media knowledge is crucial. Internet content is useful and dangerous. Internet protocols and ethics are required in Indonesia due to its large user base. According to Alwathoni et al. (2020), Indonesians value religious and cultural traditions like *tabayun*, courtesy, hospitality, cooperation, and tolerance. Media workers must understand media and digital literacy. Digital tools, more news channels, and engaged citizens have contributed. Media and computer literacy must be taught from elementary school to college.

Modern learning and development require digital literacy. Media users have better cognitive and language skills. To fulfill our civic duties, we must learn to find, read, understand, and produce content, especially digital media. Knowledgeable, creative, and hardworking people choose their media, news, and conversations (Hak, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

This comprehensive study examines the Instagram literacy of students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Yasipa. The study found that students can use Instagram in multiple ways, demonstrating media literacy. Instagram's transformation into a knowledge-sharing platform with pros and cons is notable. Teens need media literacy to evaluate and create digital content, according to the study. Students excel at using Instagram's visual and audio features. Students' ability to distinguish fact from fiction was noteworthy. Verifying the facts, providing proof, and carefully examining the report's validity can confirm its authenticity. The study emphasizes media literacy education's role in protecting students' digital experiences. Media literacy can reduce media's negative effects, improve critical thinking, and encourage ethical consumption. The study stresses the importance of media literacy training in light of the growing digital presence. This requires everyone's help. The digital ecosystem is dynamic, so teens need ongoing guidance, training, and support to adapt to media literacy. The guidance develops students' content interpretation, evaluation, and creation skills. The goal is to maximize digital engagement's benefits and minimize risks. Media literacy

promotes message comprehension, critical thinking, and ethical communication by integrating traditional and digital media. The study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive and current media literacy curriculum to develop digitally literate, skilled, and confident people.

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