



Digital Communication Competence of Foster Children: An Evaluation of the Four Pillars of Media Literacy at LKSA Kasih Ibu Bengkulu

Poppi Damayanti^{1*}, M.Ridho Syabibi², Syabithah Iffah Jauharah Rudis³

^{1,2}, Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, Indonesia

³ Bolu Abant Izzet Baysal University Turkiye

Email*: poppidamayanti@mail.uinfasbengkulu.ac.id

Received: 13 March 2026

Revised: 20 March 2026

Accepted: 27 June 2026

Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the digital communication competence of foster children at the Child Social Welfare Institution (LKSA) Kasih Ibu, Bengkulu City, through the framework of the Four Pillars of Digital Literacy. Amid the rapid expansion of digital transformation, foster children living in alternative care institutions face unique challenges related to media supervision and communication risks within cyberspace. Methods: This study employed a quantitative descriptive statistical design using a census technique involving the entire population of foster children (N = 17). Data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed based on the Indonesian National Digital Literacy Framework established by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo). The data were analyzed using percentage-based descriptive techniques. Results: The findings revealed an asymmetrical pattern of digital communication competence. Most respondents were adolescents aged 12–15 years and were enrolled in junior secondary education (53.30%). Specifically, the dimensions of Digital Ethics (54%) and Digital Skills (46.15%) were categorized as high, indicating polite communication behaviour and adequate technical proficiency in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). In contrast, Digital Safety was classified as low (46.15%), while Digital Culture was categorized as moderate (34.46%). Conclusion: The results indicate a gap between ethical communication practices and awareness of digital privacy protection. Although foster children demonstrate prosocial communication behaviours, they remain highly vulnerable to cybersecurity risks due to inadequate privacy management practices. This study recommends the implementation of caregiving policies and educational interventions focused on digital risk mitigation to protect marginalized children from potential threats and exploitation in digital public spaces.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Foster Children, Communication Competence, Digital Safety, Child Social Welfare Institution (LKSA).

Publisher's Note:

Yayasan Darussalam Bengkulu stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright

© ⓘ ⓘ CC

2026 by the author(s).

License Yayasan Darussalam, Bengkulu, Indonesia.

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).



INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology and information in the twenty-first century has brought about significant changes and challenges across societies. In Japan, the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution has gradually shifted toward the era of *Society 5.0*, a concept introduced in 2019 that emphasizes the integration of cyberspace and physical space to create a super-smart society. Today, various aspects of daily life have become increasingly dependent on computers, smartphones, tablets, and other digital technologies as tools that facilitate efficiency, accuracy, communication, and productivity in the economic, political, social, religious, and educational sectors (Ririen & Daryanes, 2022).

The development of communication technology has affected all segments of society regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, educational background, or age. Recent data released by the Indonesian Minister of Communication and Digital Affairs, Meutya Hafid, revealed that approximately 9.17% of internet users in Indonesia are children under the age of 12, commonly categorized as the post-Generation Z cohort or Generation Alpha (reported by *Kompas.com*, October 2025). Furthermore, a study conducted by Hootsuite (2020) found that among Indonesian adolescents aged 13–17 years, 7.1% of female users and 6.2% of male users actively accessed social media platforms. These findings indicate that children of school age have become increasingly engaged with the internet and social media (M. A. Harahap & Adeni, 2021). This trend suggests that internet access is now dominated by very young users, a situation that warrants serious attention considering that online information environments can expose children to various forms of harmful and inappropriate content.

Research conducted by Aheniwati (2019) revealed that many underage children, who are still in critical stages of development, already possess smartphones and can access the internet with considerable ease. Their online activities primarily involve interaction-based and information-based media. Through internet access, children become heavily exposed to online gaming and often develop alternative social lives in virtual environments. Most of these children access the internet independently at home without adequate supervision. Such circumstances may indirectly foster individualistic and socially withdrawn behaviours due to excessive dependence on smartphones and internet use. Consequently, children may feel more comfortable engaging with their virtual environments than interacting with the real-world social contexts surrounding them. (Aheniwati, 2019).

To mitigate the negative consequences of digital media, particularly social media, active involvement from families—especially parents—is essential. This assertion is supported by the findings of Palar et al. (2018), who identified a significant relationship between parental involvement in preventing the negative effects of gadget use and children's behavioural patterns regarding gadget consumption. Through effective parental supervision, children's use of digital devices and internet access can be regulated in terms of duration, frequency, and content exposure.

However, not all children have the privilege of growing up within a family environment. Many children are placed in orphanages or child welfare institutions due to various family-related constraints that hinder adequate caregiving. In such contexts, supervision and control are primarily provided by caregivers, such as dormitory mothers or institutional guardians. Nevertheless, the caregiver-to-child ratio often falls below the ideal standard, potentially limiting the effectiveness of monitoring children's use of digital devices and online activities.

Currently, LKSA Kasih Ibu Bengkulu provides care for 17 female foster children aged between 8 and 19 years, ranging from elementary to senior high school educational levels. The institution operates under the supervision of a single caregiver and one cook. Given this caregiving structure, it is important to investigate the digital communication competence of these foster children in order to obtain an accurate understanding of their online activities. The findings are expected to serve as an evidence-based foundation for future intervention programs, particularly those related to digital literacy development. Moreover, existing digital literacy research has



predominantly focused on students in mainstream educational settings while largely overlooking children in alternative care institutions who experience distinct patterns of media supervision and digital engagement.

Although digital literacy has been extensively examined among school students and university populations, limited attention has been devoted to marginalized groups residing in alternative care institutions such as Child Social Welfare Institutions (*Lembaga Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak*—LKSA). A substantial digital divide exists among foster children who have restricted access to parental guidance and individualized supervision compared to children raised within nuclear family structures. The significance of this study lies in its effort to map the digital behavior patterns of foster children at LKSA Kasih Ibu Bengkulu, where a single caregiver is responsible for mitigating communication-related risks for seventeen children simultaneously. By employing the framework of the Four Pillars of National Digital Literacy, this study seeks to address a theoretical gap concerning how digital transformation is experienced and navigated by individuals living within social welfare institutions.

Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the nature of children's social interactions. However, for foster children living in collective caregiving environments such as LKSA, this phenomenon presents a paradox between accessibility and protection. The limited caregiver-to-child ratio compared to family-based caregiving structures creates significant gaps in media supervision, increasing children's exposure to various cyber communication risks without sufficient protective competencies. Although these children are raised in institutional environments that emphasize moral values and social norms, technical competencies related to digital privacy management and cybersecurity—commonly referred to as *digital safety*—are often neglected. This condition creates communication vulnerabilities in which polite and ethical online behaviour is not necessarily accompanied by adequate awareness of data exploitation, privacy breaches, and cybersecurity threats. Based on these concerns, this study aims to evaluate the extent of digital literacy competencies among foster children at LKSA Kasih Ibu Bengkulu in responding to the increasingly complex dynamics of communication in the digital era.

Considering the limited capacity for intensive supervision within collective caregiving institutions and the growing risks associated with exposure to harmful digital content, it is essential to assess the digital competencies of foster children. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: “How can the digital literacy competence profile of foster children at LKSA Kasih Ibu Bengkulu City be described in terms of digital skills, digital safety, digital ethics, and digital culture?”

METHODS

This study was designed as descriptive research employing a quantitative approach. According to Nasir (as cited in Rukajat, 2018, p. 1), descriptive research is a type of research that seeks to describe events or phenomena that occur directly and realistically in actual situations. The purpose of descriptive research is to provide systematic, accurate, and factual descriptions of facts, characteristics, and relationships among the phenomena being studied (Sugiyono, 2022). Furthermore, descriptive statistics are statistical techniques used to analyze data by describing or illustrating the collected data as they are, without intending to make general conclusions or generalizations (Sholikhah, 2016).

The population of this study consisted of 17 foster children at LKSA Kasih Ibu. A saturated sampling technique (census) was employed because the population size was relatively small (Muslim et al., 2018). Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Subsequently, data processing involved: (1) a validity test to determine whether the questionnaire distributed to all respondents was valid and appropriate for measuring the intended variables; and (2) a reliability test to examine data consistency and measure the extent to which the instrument could be considered reliable and dependable (Muslim et al., 2018). This study utilized descriptive



percentage statistics. According to Sugiyono (2011), descriptive statistics include data presented in the form of tables, graphs, charts, pie diagrams, as well as calculations of mean, mode, median, deciles, distribution measures, averages, standard deviations, and percentages (Melyza & Aguss, 2021) After classifying the data into their respective categories, the variables in this study were analyzed using the percentage formula proposed by Anas Sudijono (Angga Narendra Putra, 2020) as follows: $\text{Frequency} : \text{Total sample} \times 100\%$

Where:

p = percentage

F = Frequency

N = Total Number of Samples (Melyza & Aguss, 2021)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

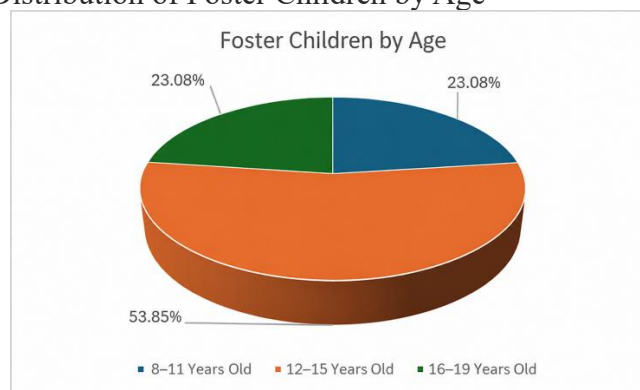
After distributing the questionnaire to the foster children, the data were analyzed using percentage calculations. The results obtained are presented as follows:

Description of Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

a. Age of Foster Children

The foster children residing at LKSA Kasih Ibu ranged in age from 8 to 19 years old. Most of the foster children were between 12 and 15 years of age (53.85%). A child is defined as an individual under 18 (eighteen) years of age, including those still in the womb (Murary et al., 2024). At LKSA Kasih Ibu, one foster child was 19 years old because she had not yet completed her senior high school education.

Figure 1
Distribution of Foster Children by Age

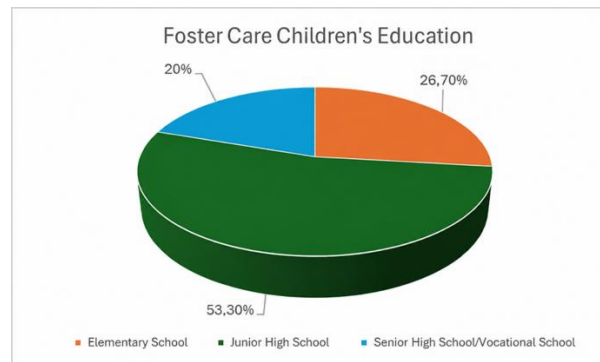


Children within this age range are still in a crucial phase of identity formation and possess a high level of curiosity, including in their engagement with digital media. The ease of access and anonymity offered by social media often lead adolescents to engage in unethical behaviors, such as cyberbullying, the dissemination of misinformation (hoaxes), and violations of privacy (Dewi & Safitri, 2021). This phenomenon raises concerns regarding the influence of social media on adolescents' moral and ethical development. Adolescents are at a critical stage in the formation of their identities and moral values. Interactions on social media platforms, which are often characterized by limited adult supervision, may shape norms and behaviors that conflict with the ethical values expected by society (Sari, 2019). (A. S. Harahap et al., 2024)

b. Foster Children's Educational Level

Most of the foster children at LKSA Kasih Ibu are currently enrolled in **junior secondary education (SMP/MTs)**, accounting for **53.30%** of the respondents. Meanwhile, **26.70%** are studying at the **senior secondary level (SMA/SMK)**, and only **20%** are enrolled in **elementary education (SD/MI)**. Regarding school placement, LKSA Kasih Ibu collaborates with schools within the Muhammadiyah educational network as well as schools located in the surrounding area of LKSA Kasih Ibu (**Figure 2**).

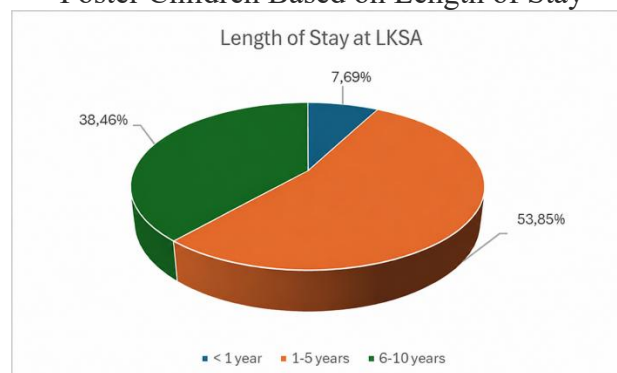
Figure 2
Foster Children Based on Education



c. Length of Stay at the Orphanage

The duration of the foster children staying at LKSA Kasih Ibu ranges from less than 1 year to up to 10 years. The majority (53.85%) have stayed for approximately 5–10 years (Figure 3)

Figure 3
Foster Children Based on Length of Stay

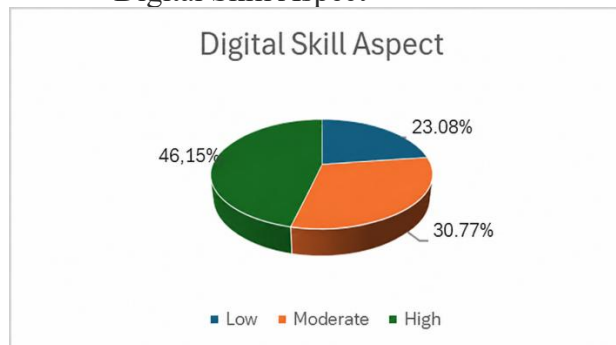


Description of Digital Literacy Level

a. Digital Skill Aspect

Data from Diagram.4 shows that the digital skill aspect is generally in the high category, namely 46.15%. This means that the children under the care of LKSA Kasih Ibu generally already have an understanding and skills in operating computers and mobile phones, using word processing applications (such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs) to complete school assignments, using search features in search engines (such as Google) effectively, downloading and uploading files or photos correctly, and sending and receiving messages via email.

Figure 4
Digital Skill Aspect

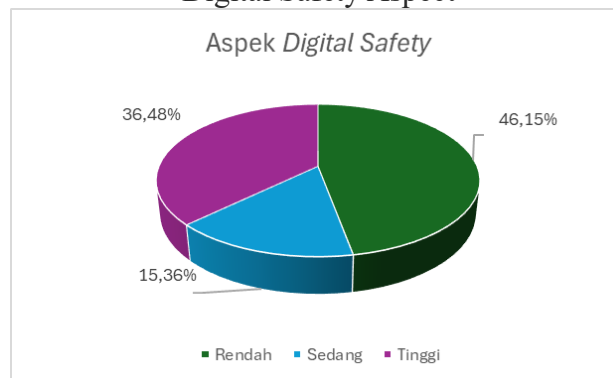


This indicates a relationship between “Digital Skill” and “Computer-Mediated Communication” (CMC), namely communication efficacy, where the foster children have high confidence in using communication tools (mobile phones/applications). Their communication behavior has fully shifted to digital media (CMC). However, since their Digital Culture is still at a moderate level (34.46%), their communication behavior may still be limited to content consumption and has not yet reached participatory and productive communication behavior (such as creating local cultural content).

b. Digital Safety Aspect

For the findings in the Digital Safety aspect, most of the foster children are in the low category (46.15%). This shows that the foster children of LKSA Kasih Ibu are still weak in using different and strong passwords for each social media account or application, and do not immediately change passwords when they feel their accounts are unsafe or have been hacked. They are also weak in protecting personal data (such as home addresses or phone numbers) from strangers on the internet, and in understanding how to block or report social media accounts that post negative or disturbing comments. In addition, they are less careful when clicking links or downloading applications from unknown sources.

Figure 5
Digital Safety Aspect

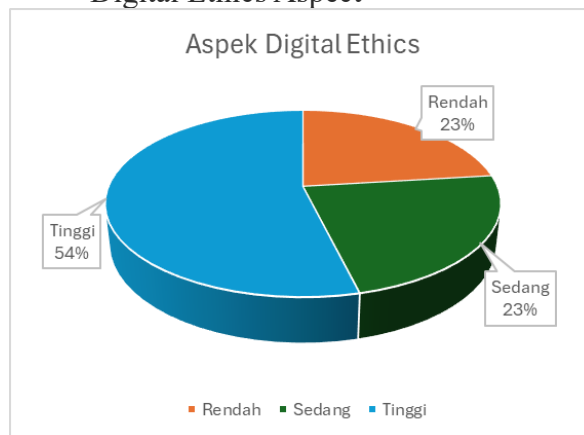


The data indicates a relationship between low “Digital Safety” and risky communication behavior, specifically within the framework of Privacy Management Theory (Sandra Petronio). The foster children tend to engage in excessive self-disclosure without considering security risks. Their communication behavior in digital public spaces tends to be “open,” meaning they do not adequately protect passwords or personal data. This reflects a problem in strategic communication behavior; they understand how to communicate appropriately (ethically), but they do not yet understand how to maintain privacy (safety).

c. Digital Ethics Aspect

From the data analysis of the Digital Ethics aspect, the results show that 54% are in the high category (Diagram.6). This means that the foster children of LKSA Kasih Ibu generally already have an understanding and ability to use polite language and not spread hate when interacting on social media. They consistently verify information (fact-check) before sharing it with others (not spreading hoaxes), respect others' privacy and do not access other people's accounts without permission, avoid plagiarism or taking other people's work (such as photos or written texts) without citing the source, and are willing to accept differences of opinion during online discussions without getting angry or insulting others.

Figure 6
Digital Ethics Aspect

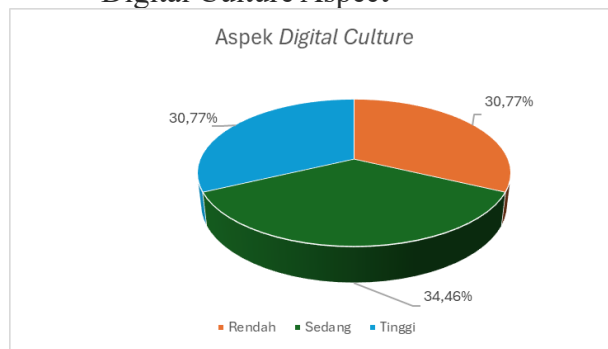


The data indicates a relationship between high “Digital Ethics” and interpersonal communication ethics, specifically polite communication behavior (Politeness Theory). The foster children demonstrate prosocial communication behavior. Although they do not live with their biological parents, the internalization of religious and social values in LKSA has successfully shaped communication behavior that is free from hate speech and hoaxes. This demonstrates that the institutional caregiving environment influences their interpersonal communication behavior on social media.

d. Digital Culture Aspect

Based on Diagram.7, the Digital Culture aspect shows that the majority (34.46%) are in the moderate category in terms of understanding and skills in using the internet to search for information about the culture or history of the Bengkulu region, utilizing digital media to support positive activities in LKSA (for example, promoting activities or learning purposes), creating digital content (such as short videos, posters, or written texts) that is beneficial, using social media to maintain good communication with friends, family, and LKSA administrators, and understanding that the internet is a public space and that everything uploaded becomes a digital footprint.

Figure 7
Digital Culture Aspect



Discussion

The data audit results show an interesting behavioral communication anomaly among the foster children of LKSA Kasih Ibu. The high digital ethics score (54%) reflects the successful internalization of character values taught within the institution. However, this figure is inversely related to digital safety competence, which only reaches the low category (46.15%). Phenomenologically, this indicates that the foster children tend to exhibit “blind trust” in online interactions. They understand how to communicate politely in digital spaces, but neglect fundamental privacy protocols. This vulnerability is further exacerbated by a collective caregiving pattern that places greater emphasis on moral aspects rather than technical cybersecurity aspects, thereby placing the foster children at greater risk of future personal data exploitation.

These findings indicate a significant contradiction between the high level of Digital Ethics (54%) and the low level of Digital Safety (46.15%). This phenomenon suggests that although the foster children at LKSA Kasih Ibu have good moral awareness in cyberspace interactions—likely influenced by religious-based caregiving under the ‘Aisyiyah institution—they still have concerning technical vulnerabilities. The low score in personal data protection and account security indicators reflects a technical knowledge gap that has not yet been accommodated in daily caregiving practices.

Theoretically, the low level of Digital Safety among foster children can be linked to limitations in the support system within alternative care institutions. Unlike children living in nuclear families with intensive parental supervision, foster children in LKSA face limitations in the caregiver-to-child ratio. As described in the introduction, supervision at LKSA Kasih Ibu is carried out collectively by one dormitory caregiver for 17 children. This limitation causes control over children’s digital activities to be more macro in nature (such as limiting gadget usage duration) but weak in micro aspects, such as education on password security, phishing threats, or the importance of two-factor authentication (2FA).

Furthermore, the background of foster children as a marginalized group often places them in a disadvantaged position in accessing information regarding digital risk mitigation. This lack of security literacy potentially exposes them to cyber threats such as account hacking, online fraud, and personal data exploitation. Therefore, high ethical and technical digital skills without being accompanied by adequate digital safety protection make foster children “competent yet vulnerable” subjects in digital spaces. These findings emphasize that digital transformation in social welfare institutions must shift from merely providing internet access to strengthening risk mitigation capacity for foster children.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully mapped the digital literacy profile of foster children at LKSA Kasih Ibu, Bengkulu City, which shows a disconnection between competency indicators. Although the respondents demonstrate high levels of Digital Ethics (54%) and Digital Skills (46.15%) as a reflection of successful character value internalization within the institution, there is a critical vulnerability in the Digital Safety aspect (46.15%), which is in the low category. This condition answers the research problem that digital transformation in the orphanage environment is still technical-functional in nature but has not yet become protective. The practical implication of these findings emphasizes that caregiving models in the digital era are no longer sufficient to focus only on monitoring gadget usage duration, but must shift toward strengthening privacy management and cyber risk mitigation. Therefore, it is recommended that social welfare institutions integrate an independent digital safety curriculum and establish strategic collaboration with academics to transform foster children from merely digitally competent subjects into resilient digital subjects.

REFERENCES

- Adyawanti, T. (2017). *Kompetensi komunikasi*. 2, 103–108.
- Aheniwati. (2019). Pengaruh Internet Bagi Anak. *Edukasia*, 6 Nomor 2, 53–60.
- Ashari, M., & Idris, N. S. (2019). Kemampuan Literasi Digital Generasi Digital Native. *Seminar Internasional Riksa Bahasa XIII*, 1355–1362.
- Harahap, A. S., Nabila, S., Sahyati, D., Tindaon, M., & Batubara, A. (2024). *Pengaruh Media Sosial Terhadap Perilaku Etika Remaja Di Era Digital*. 2, 1–9.
- Harahap, M. A., & Adeni, S. (2021). Aksesibilitas Anak Terhadap Media : Internet Sehat Bagi Anak. *Jurnal Profesional FIS UNIVED*, 8(1), 1–7.
- Kurniati, N. K., Islamuddin, I. I., & Jafrizal, J. J. (2020). Pkm Panti Asuhan ‘Aisyiyah Kasih Ibu Kota Bengkulu. *JAPI (Jurnal Akses Pengabdian Indonesia)*, 4(2), 122–129. <https://doi.org/10.33366/japi.v4i2.1581>
- Liansari, V., & Nuroh, E. Z. (2018). Realitas Penerapan Literasi Digital bagi Mahasiswa FKIP Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo. *Proceedings of The ICECRS*, 1(3), 241–252. <https://doi.org/10.21070/picecrs.v1i3.1397>
- Melyza, A., & Aguss, R. M. (2021). Persepsi Siswa Terhadap Proses Penerapan Pembelajaran Pendidikan Jasmani Olahraga Dan Kesehatan Pada Pandemi Covid-19. *Journal Of Physical Education*, 2(1), 8–16. <https://doi.org/10.33365/joupe.v2i1.950>
- Murary, W., Baho, D., & Ranglalin, O. M. (2024). Peningkatan Pemahaman Hak Anak Dalam Panti Asuhan Bukit Hermon Berdasarkan Undang-Undang Nomor 35 Tahun 2014. *SOLIDEO Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 2(2), 88–95. <https://doi.org/10.56942/js.v2i2.203>
- Muslim, Faisal, M., & Mentari. (2018). Pengaruh Kompetensi Auditor, Tekanan Ketaatan, dan Kompleksitas Tugas Terhadap Audit JudgmentBJRA Vol. 1 (2) Oktober 2018. *BJRA Vol. 1 (2) Oktober 2018*, 1, 8–17.
- Nasionalita, K., & Nugroho, C. (2020). Indeks Literasi Digital Generasi Milenial di Kabupaten Bandung. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 18(1), 32. <https://doi.org/10.31315/jik.v18i1.3075>
- Palar, J. E., Onibala, F., & Wenda Oroh. (2018). Negatif Penggunaan Gadget Pada Anak Dengan Perilaku Anak Dalam Penggunaan Gadget. *E-Journal Keperawatan*, 6(2), 1–8.



- Qamarina, N. (2017). Peranan Panti Asuhan Dalam Melaksanakan Fungsi Pengganti Keluarga Anak Asuh Di Uptd Panti Sosial Asuhan Anak Harapan Kota Samarinda. *EJournal Administrasi Negara*, 5(3), 6488–6501.
- Ririen, D., & Daryanes, F. (2022). Analisis Literasi Digital Mahasiswa. *Research and Development Journal of Education*, 8(1), 210. <https://doi.org/10.30998/rdje.v8i1.11738>
- Sholikhah, A. (2016). Statistik Deskriptif Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif. *KOMUNIKA: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi*, 10(2), 342–362. <https://doi.org/10.24090/komunika.v10i2.953>
- Sugiyono. (2022). Identifikasi Perilaku Bidang Pengembangan Moral Anak Kelompok B Di Tk It Al-Dhaifullah Desa Betung Kecamatan Abab Kabupaten *Alfabeta, Bandung*, 27–44.
- WANO. (2018). PENGUATAN LITERASI DIGITAL MELALUI PELATIHAN SKILL DIGITAL PADA ANAK ASUH DI PANTI ASUHAN BALI AS SALAM. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan*, 33–41.
- Wardani, A., Hayati, K., Suprayitno, D., & Hartanto. (2023). Gen Z dan Empat Pilar Literasi Digital. *Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat Nusantara (JPkMN)*, 4(4), 3995–4002.
- Yanti, N., Mulyati, Y., Sunendar, D., & Damaianti, V. (2021). Tingkat Literasi Digital Mahasiswa Indonesia. *Diksa: Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia*, 7(1), 59–71. <https://doi.org/10.33369/diksa.v7i1.22391>
- <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2025/02/18/16050481/menkomdigi-917-persen-pengguna-internet-indonesia-usianya-di-bawah-12-tahun>.