



Strategies for Enhancing Media Literacy and Communication Quality among Youth in the Digital Era

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Abstract. This study addresses the communication challenges faced by youth in the digital era, particularly their lack of critical understanding. Using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) method and involving 20 cross-sectoral informants, the findings indicate that media literacy (0.75) is prioritized over communication quality (0.25), with critical thinking as the primary sub-criterion. The most effective strategy is integrating media literacy into formal curricula (0.423), followed by community training and digital platforms (0.227), and social media campaigns (0.123). Formal education is deemed the most sustainable and effective approach in fostering ethical and reflective digital communication competencies.

Keywords: Media literacy, communication quality, youth, Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP)

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has transformed how young people interact, providing vast access to information while posing challenges in media literacy and communication quality. Livingstone and Helsper [1] argue that youth are more technically adept than critically discerning, despite the crucial role of critical thinking. Buckingham [2] emphasizes that media literacy encompasses an understanding of the social and political contexts behind content, not merely technological access. Potter [3] defines media literacy as awareness of media structures, information evaluation, and responsible message production. Hobbs [4] highlights the need for a reflective approach in media literacy education to protect youth from misinformation and extremism.

McQuail [5] demonstrates that digital media alters communication structures, affecting clarity and empathy. Valkenburg and Peter [6] add that while digital interaction has increased, conversational quality has declined. The AHP method is highly relevant for formulating data-driven and participatory strategies [7], [8]. Jenkins et al. [9] and Hobbs & Coiro [10] advocate for participatory approaches, positioning students as active meaning-makers. This study aims to develop practical and empirically tested media literacy strategies for digital education and policy in Indonesia. Accordingly, media literacy among the younger generation comprises awareness, access, comprehension, critical thinking, content creation, reflective engagement, and ethical action.

According to McQuail [5], communication quality is the ability of a message to be delivered clearly, relevantly, ethically, and with impact within a social context. Communication quality encompasses motivation, knowledge, skills, empathy, and adaptability.

Media literacy and communication quality strategies must be adaptive [11]. Curriculum integration, teacher training [4], [12], peer-to-peer learning [13], [9], social media campaigns [14], [15], and interactive digital platforms [2], [16] are strategic approaches to enhance youth media literacy and communication quality. Based on expert insights, the following strategies are proposed:

- Integration of Media Literacy into Formal Education Curricula
- Community Training & Peer-to-Peer Learning
- Educational Social Media Campaigns

- Development of Digital Educational Platforms (Apps, Websites, Games)

METHODS

This study quantifies qualitative data using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) approach [17] to gain an in-depth understanding of optimal strategies for enhancing youth media literacy and communication quality in the digital era.

1. DATA SOURCES AND COLLECTION

Data was obtained from 20 purposively selected informants, including young practitioners, university students, guidance counselors, and academics, in accordance with Patton’s guidelines [18]. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, as recommended by Charmaz [19]. Thematic analysis was performed following Braun & Clarke’s approach [20].

2. AHP TECHNIQUE

According to Saaty [17], AHP assists in prioritizing alternatives based on predefined criteria. After forming and normalizing the pairwise comparison matrix, priority vectors, consistency index (CI), and consistency ratio (CR) were calculated. If $CR < 0.1$, the weight results are considered consistent and reliable. The pairwise comparison matrix was structured as an $n \times n$ square matrix, where diagonal elements equal 1 and reciprocal relationships hold for off-diagonal elements:

$$W = \begin{bmatrix} W_{11} & W_{21} & \dots & W_{1m} \\ W_{12} & W_{22} & \dots & W_{2m} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ W_{1m} & W_{2m} & \dots & W_{mm} \end{bmatrix}$$

After normalizing this matrix (each element divided by its column total), the priority vector was derived by averaging each row. To ensure judgment consistency, the consistency index (CI) and consistency ratio (CR) were computed:

$$CI = \frac{\lambda_{max} - n}{n - 1}, \quad CR = \frac{CI}{RI}$$

Here, λ_{max} represents the largest eigenvalue, n is the number of elements, and RI is the random index. If $CR < 0.1$ (10%), the matrix is deemed consistent, and the weight results are accepted. The AHP model provides a systematic and measurable framework, enabling evidence-based strategy formulation with clear priorities.

3. CRITERIA DETERMINATION

The AHP-based approach was employed for criteria determination, as visualized in the following figure.



FIGURE Criteria for optimizing media literacy and communication quality strategies using the AHP model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. COMPARISON OF MAIN CRITERIA

In the pairwise comparison between media literacy and communication quality, media literacy was deemed three times more important than communication quality in the context of optimizing youth communication strategies.

Table 1: Comparison of Main Criteria

Criteria	Media Literacy	Communication Quality
Media Literacy	1	3
Communication Quality	1/3	1

Potter [3] asserts that effective media literacy is not merely about information consumption but also involves ethical and reflective content production.

Table 2: Priority Weights of Criteria

Criteria	Priority Weight
Media Literacy	0.75
Communication Quality	0.25

CR: 0.00

Media literacy received a priority weight of 0.75—three times higher than communication quality (0.25)—highlighting its urgency in youth communication strategies. A consistency ratio (CR) of 0.00 indicates logical and accurate evaluation. Supporting this, UNICEF data reveals that 79.2% of youth require advanced media literacy. While communication quality remains important, a combination of both is necessary to ensure young people can adapt and engage in productive dialogue in the digital era.

Media Literacy Sub-Criteria

The AHP results in Table 3 demonstrate that Critical Thinking (A4) holds the highest significance, indicating that analytical skills in media engagement are the top priority in media literacy. Awareness (A1) and Access (A2) also emerged as crucial aspects, reflecting the need for media knowledge and accessibility in optimizing communication.

Table 3: Pairwise Comparison of Media Literacy Sub-Criteria

Sub-Criteria	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7
A1: Awareness	1	2	3	½	3	2	3
A2: Access	½	1	2	⅓	2	1	2
A3: Understanding	⅓	½	1	⅓	1	1	2
A4: Critical Thinking	2	3	3	1	3	2	3
A5: Production	⅓	½	1	⅓	1	1	2
A6: Reflection	½	1	1	½	1	1	2
A7: Action & Ethics	⅓	½	½	⅓	½	½	1

A European Commission survey [21] found that 68% of youth consider critical thinking essential for accurately discerning digital information. Thus, communication strategies should emphasize critical thinking, awareness, and media access. Critical Thinking received the highest weight (0.287), followed by Awareness (0.220).

Table 4: Priority Weights of Media Literacy Sub-Criteria

Sub-Criteria	Priority Weight
Awareness	0.220
Access	0.131
Understanding	0.093

Sub-Criteria	Priority Weight
Critical Thinking	0.287
Production	0.093
Reflection	0.113
Action & Ethics	0.063
CR = 0.022	

Potter [3] emphasizes that effective media literacy extends beyond information consumption to include ethical and reflective content production, as reflected in the weights of Reflection (A6) and Action & Ethics (A7). The low CR value (< 0.1) confirms the reliability and logical consistency of the AHP results.

2. COMMUNICATION QUALITY SUB-CRITERIA

For communication quality, Knowledge (0.423) ranked highest, reinforcing that communication quality depends on cognitive and affective capacities rather than mere digital engagement [1].

Table 5: Pairwise Comparison of Communication Quality Sub-Criteria

Sub-Criteria	B1	B2	B3	B4
B1: Motivation	1	½	2	1
B2: Knowledge	2	1	3	2
B3: Skills	½	⅓	1	½
B4: Empathy & Adaptability	1	½	2	1

The AHP results highlight Knowledge as the foundation of effective youth communication, aligning with OECD findings [22] that 75% of youth consider understanding effective communication crucial for social interaction success. Motivation and Empathy support social responsiveness, while Skills remain vital for impactful messaging.

Table 6: Priority Weights of Communication Quality Sub-Criteria

Sub-Criteria	Priority Weight
Motivation	0.227

Sub-Criteria	Priority Weight
Knowledge	0.423
Skills	0.123
Empathy & Adaptability	0.227
<i>CR: 0.0038</i>	

The low CR (0.0038) indicates highly reliable decision-making without respondent preference contradictions. These sub-criteria necessitate strategies that integrate knowledge with motivation and empathy to ensure adaptive, effective, and sustainable communication in dynamic digital environments.

Strategy Priorities

The AHP results positioned Formal Curriculum Integration as the top strategy, emphasizing structured and sustained education. Community Training and Digital Platforms held moderate weights, proving effective for practical experience and broad access. While Social Media Campaigns had a lower weight, they remain relevant for short-term messaging.

Table 7: Pairwise Comparison of Strategies

Strategy	S1	S2	S3	S4
S1: Formal Curriculum	1	2	3	2
S2: Community Training	½	1	2	1
S3: Social Media Campaigns	⅓	½	1	½
S4: Digital Education Platforms	½	1	2	1

Based on the AHP calculation across the entire hierarchy, the global priority weights for strategies to optimize media literacy and communication quality among youth are as follows:

Table 8: Global Priority Weights of Strategies

Strategy	Global Priority Weight
Formal Curriculum Integration	0.423
Community Peer Learning	0.227

Strategy	Global Priority Weight
Social Media Educational Campaigns	0.123
Digital Education Platforms	0.227

The optimal strategy is integrating media literacy into formal curricula (42.3%). Buckingham [2] stresses that curriculum integration fosters early social and critical awareness. Rêgo et al. [11] argue that successful digital transformation requires adaptive policy frameworks, while Castells [23] highlights the necessity of information management skills in a network society.

These findings underscore the need for a multi-strategy approach, combining structured education, community engagement, and digital innovation to enhance youth media literacy and communication quality effectively.

CONCLUSIONS

Media literacy emerges as the predominant factor in shaping youth communication quality in the digital era, with a dominant weight of 0.75 compared to communication quality (0.25). The most influential aspects are critical thinking and media awareness, underscoring the importance of reflective capabilities in content interpretation. The most effective strategy is the integration of media literacy into formal curricula (0.423), demonstrating the necessity for a systematic and institutionalized approach. The Indonesian government is advised to reform the national education curriculum by incorporating critical and interdisciplinary media literacy, thereby fostering cognitively autonomous and ethically grounded individuals.

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