

Portrait of Children's Media Literacy in Border Areas

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the digital literacy activities of students in border areas in Bengkulu. This research will be conducted in elementary schools in two border areas in the city of Bengkulu, namely State Elementary School 13 Babatan Seluma Regency and State Elementary School 54 Tanjung Sakti in Central Bengkulu Regency. Meanwhile, the respondents and informants of this study were elementary school students in grades 5 and 6. The selection of the research site was considered because the school's location was far from the city centre of Bengkulu and was on the outskirts of the border area. The research phase carried out is the identification of media impact problems among elementary school children (especially in schools that are the object of research), a Survey of consumption patterns, media access, media habits, and media utilization among elementary school children (at school and home); The literature review covers aspects of the elementary school curriculum and alternative development, and a literature study of the principles of media literacy applied to learning at the elementary school level. The results also showed that the questionnaire of this study was divided into five parts, namely introduction, self-identity, media behaviour, children's activities on social media and closing. Data captured in the answers of students or respondents illustrates that media activities, both audio-visual and digital, are very high in access. This is supported by their many opportunities for access to both media. In addition, parental supervision tends to be weak in controlling children's media behaviour.

A. Introduction

It is undeniable that today, humans live in an era of abundant information. The available and ready-to-access media is not only television or print media, but children are also familiar with internet media (Polanco-Levicán & Salvo-Garrido, 2022). In Indonesia, there are currently 12 national television stations and 129 local television stations (Navarro-Martínez et al., 2023), 1800 radio stations, 40 national newspapers (Lintasberita.Com, 2010) as well as more than 1 trillion internet sites that can be accessed quickly (Kemkominfo dan Katadata Insight Center, 2020). The large number of mass media followed by this increase in information certainly needs to be wary of. Because, after all, not all information in the mass media is accurate and valuable (De Paor & Heravi, 2020).

The closeness of the community to the media can bring meaningful change. These changes make it easier for them to gain access to existing information. Unfortunately, the closeness of the media to the very close community and bringing good impacts also has terrible impacts. This closeness has a bad influence on

people's behaviour, both psychologically and effectively. Call it digital media, such as television. According to the results of a study by the Children's Media Development Foundation, programs presented by national television in Indonesia still contain many elements of violence and pornography. This closeness has a bad influence on people's behaviour, both psychologically and effectively. Call it digital media, such as television. According to a study by the Children's Media Development Foundation, programs presented by national television in Indonesia still contain many elements of violence and pornography.

In Bengkulu Province, the concept and even media literacy activities can be said to be unknown or understood by the public. Meanwhile, parents' and teachers' anxiety about the media's negative impact is increasing. However, they do not yet understand the concept of media literacy. So, knowledge about media literacy becomes essential in the scope of schools.

Since 2009, the research team has started pioneering the media literacy movement in Bengkulu City. However, media literacy activities do not only need to be developed in schools in urban areas. Border areas far from the city centre are also subject to negative media impacts. Proven in some news in local media, it is precisely the adverse effects of media, such as pornography, romance and physical violence carried out by children of elementary school age due to the influence of television media. Not to mention the presence of digital media that brings children closer to the negative impact. For this reason, in this study, children who attend elementary schools in the border areas of Bengkulu Province will be empowered to be literate about the adverse effects of media at an early age. In addition, there is no national policy and strategy for border area development that firmly prioritizes human competitiveness in the form of protection against the adverse effects of the media.

It has become commonplace when the attention to the impact of television media on children in Bengkulu City is very worrying. At least this is the phenomenal finding of research conducted by Gushevinalti et al. in 2012 by examining early childhood media habits in Bengkulu City. Children's accessibility to television exceeds the ideal hours of more than 5 hours a day. This condition is exacerbated by no supervision or assistance from parents or other families when watching television. So that the tendency of children to freely watch any program they want to watch, even shows aimed at ordinary people, have become ordinary events they see. Almost all children know and understand the meaning of adult songs and understand pornographic concepts from various soap operas or movies they watch with other family members. Also, at school, teachers do not attach too much importance to aspects of media literacy for their students (Intan et al., 2021; Wajdi et al., 2021; Yulista, 2021).

Media literacy is the ability to access, understand the content, analyze, evaluate, and create messages in various contexts (Hidayat & Lubis, 2021). This ability is essential for people to understand how the media works against them. In addition, having this ability can be a 'fortress' for the community not to rawly 'swallow' the content of the media displayed. With this ability, the school community can choose, filter and 'digest' the media wisely. This activity needs to be carried out continuously by involving children and teachers. Concern about the low quality of TV programs, as well as other mass media, caused the research team to try to find alternative solutions to reduce the adverse effects of the media, especially for children in border areas who incidentally also have high access to media. This kind of concern eventually gave birth to media literacy movements and activities.

Since media is ubiquitous, it is not enough if the principles of media literacy are only taught for a moment and are not integrated into everyday life. For this reason, several countries, such as Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, implement media literacy in the learning curriculum in schools ranging from kindergarten to middle school to equip children as early as possible with media literacy skills (Wu, 2019; Yulista, 2021).

Starting from such examples, the need for a media education curriculum as a form of media literacy application in elementary schools is the primary intervention target based on a priority scale. In addition to being influenced by age, media habits, and consumption behaviour patterns, the choice of elementary school students is also based on the fact that the earlier a person is exposed to the principles of media literacy, the stronger his defence against the destructive influence of the media (Lestari & Dwijayanti, 2020). Moreover, since childhood, children are instilled with media literacy. They will later have positive values towards the media and can use it healthily. Herein lies the urgency of the importance of media literacy-based media education for elementary school students. Cultural literacy helps counteract negative impacts and take positive benefits of television broadcasting as a medium of education and information (Iordache et al., 2017).

This research will be conducted in elementary schools located in the border area of Bengkulu City, namely elementary schools in Pondok Kelapa Central Bengkulu and elementary schools in Seluma Regency. The selection of the research site was considered because the school's location was far from the city centre of Bengkulu and was on the outskirts of the border area. The results of the team's search attention for elementary school-level children at the predetermined location do not exist, let alone concerns about the adverse effects of the media are always open at any time. So children must get media literacy skills. In addition, there is also much stigma that children living around border areas tend to have abusive behaviour and poor communication ethics and children's access to television media is very high. Hence, action needs to be taken to prevent other dangers of their access to the media through the development of media literacy in the school curriculum.

In general, this research's urgent problem is that the exposure to communication media such as television and digital media not only occurs in big cities but has now penetrated to rural or border areas in Bengkulu City. Concerns arise when the messages consumed by children and high activity in the media become an advantage to initiate a media literacy mapping through the curriculum in elementary schools. Thus, the behaviour of media literacy mapping will initiate a vital media literacy movement for children. Meanwhile, children's morals are increasingly concerned with high access to media and a lack of education for mass media programs/impressions.

Based on the background and urgency of the research above, the specific objectives of this research are media access mapping and media literacy-based media education development, identifying the problem of media impact among elementary school children (especially in schools that are the object of research), and survey of consumption patterns, media access, media habits, and media utilization among elementary school children (at school and home).

B. Research Methods

In order to achieve the general objective of this research, namely the development and strengthening of media literacy in elementary schools, this research uses various methods with qualitative and quantitative approaches. Thus, this research utilization and analysis of data of different natures (qualitative and quantitative) will be adjusted to the stage.

Thus, this research will combine several types of methods according to the stages of data needed to produce research output. These methods are interviews, document studies or literature reviews, and surveys.

This research conducted in elementary schools in two border areas in the city of Bengkulu, namely State Elementary School 13 Babatan Seluma Regency and SDN 54 Tanjung Sakti in Central Bengkulu Regency. This research was conducted in 2021. Meanwhile, the respondents and informants of this study were elementary school students in grades 5 and 6. The research phase carried out is the identification of media impact problems among elementary school children (especially in schools that are the object of research), Survey of consumption patterns, media access, media habits, and media utilization among elementary school children (at school and home); The literature review covers aspects of the elementary school curriculum and alternative development, and a literature study of the principles of media literacy applied to learning at the elementary level.

C. Results and Discussion

The results showed that the questionnaire of this study was divided into five parts, namely introduction, self-identity, media behaviour, children's activities on social media and closing. Data captured in the answers of students or respondents illustrates that media activities, both audio-visual and digital, are very high in access. This is supported by their many opportunities for access to both media. In addition, parental supervision tends to be weak in controlling children's media behaviour.

The data shows that specific concerns about children's access to social media have been found in this study. The age of social media users is not even a filter in using social media, as it is known that the minimum age of social media users is 13 years (McGregor, 2024). This finding shows that there needs to be some literacy for media users so that the adverse effects of media certainly do not affect children.

The most widely used social media by informants is Facebook, which 43 people or 55.12%. They turned out to be they felt unsociable if they did not have a Facebook account. In using Facebook, they feel free to write things in status; they can write anything they feel like happy, sad or other emotional feelings. In

addition, by having a Facebook account, they can play online games and make online shopping transactions involving their parents. In this position, parents have made a setback, namely, too early to introduce social media to children not yet 13 years old (McGregor, 2024). It is most of the parents who teach them to get acquainted with the Internet.

Furthermore, there were several respondents with their brothers and teachers. Few are familiar with the Internet with their friends. Interestingly, respondents are trying themselves when first getting acquainted with the Internet.

Efforts to protect children from the negative influence of the media due to rapid changes in media life in Indonesia make media literacy skills necessary. In general, the findings of this study are that children's activities on television and social media have not entered a very alarming level. However, the data shows that the potential for a more worrisome direction is likely. So that with the information netted from questionnaires and interviews, media literacy activities must be carried out immediately to make children aware of the dangers of media, both mass media and digital media. This is done because life now is undoubtedly inseparable from media access; everywhere, the media surrounds audiences in various forms. As seen in this study, sources of information for children can be in the form of television and internet media, which, of course, is very wide-reaching.

At the school level, in addition to standing as its own subject, media education can be integrated into several subjects, such as history, science, social studies, and language and literature. For this reason, in this activity, in addition to children who become databases, teachers also play an essential role in realizing children who are critical of the media. School-based media literacy education in Bengkulu, especially at SDN 13 Babatan Seluma and SDN 54 Tanjung Sakti Bengkulu Tengah, has not been carried out as has been done in several regions in Indonesia, namely being part of the curriculum.

Children's Media Behavior

As an effort to describe the behaviour of children consuming media (television), in this study, several vital questions became the benchmark for other types of television shows that are most liked, frequency of watching television in a week, time watching television Monday-Friday, time watching television Saturday-Sunday, fondness to watch soap operas and friends when watching. The following respondents' answers are summarized in the following chart:

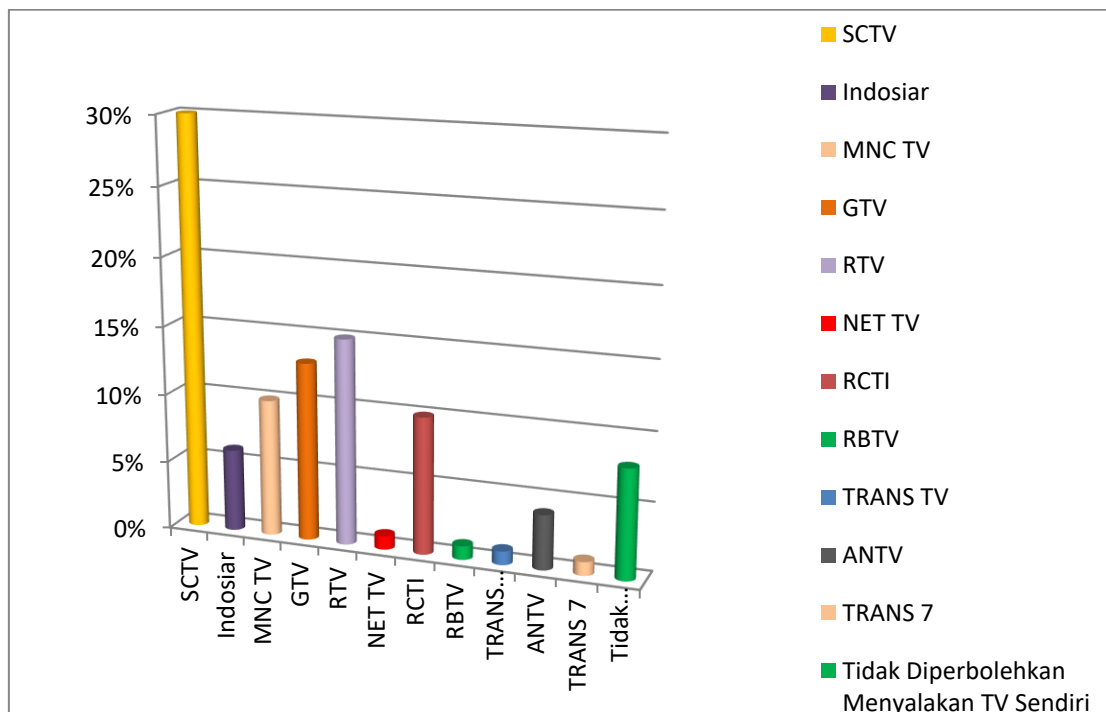


Figure 1. Frequently Accessed Television Stations

The television station most often watched by children is SCTV, evidenced by a figure of 30% compared to other TV stations. For example, RTV only 15% watch. During interviews with children, they shared that

SCTV has a lot of entertainment shows, cartoons and teen soap operas that attract all. However, some respondents not only watch one TV station; several other television programs also attract their attention, such as music shows on Indosiar, game shows on MNC and children's cartoons on RCTI.

Children's behaviour in consuming media in this study is generally rather worrying, but based on the data netted that when viewed from the type of television show that is preferred in the form of teenage soap operas; most informants were chosen from as many as 32 people (42%). In fact, not all soap operas/film content is safe for children. However, this kind of knowledge is not so crucial to the Respondent. Meanwhile, as many as 24 people (31%) liked cartoons. No less dangerous than cartoons, currently, the results of research conducted by YPMA soap operas that air on Indonesian television are mostly not educational and more to public lies. Although most informants like entertainment shows, ten people (12%) like the news. Informants who liked watching music were seven fewer people (12%) compared to informants who liked game shows or games on television as many as five people or 8%.

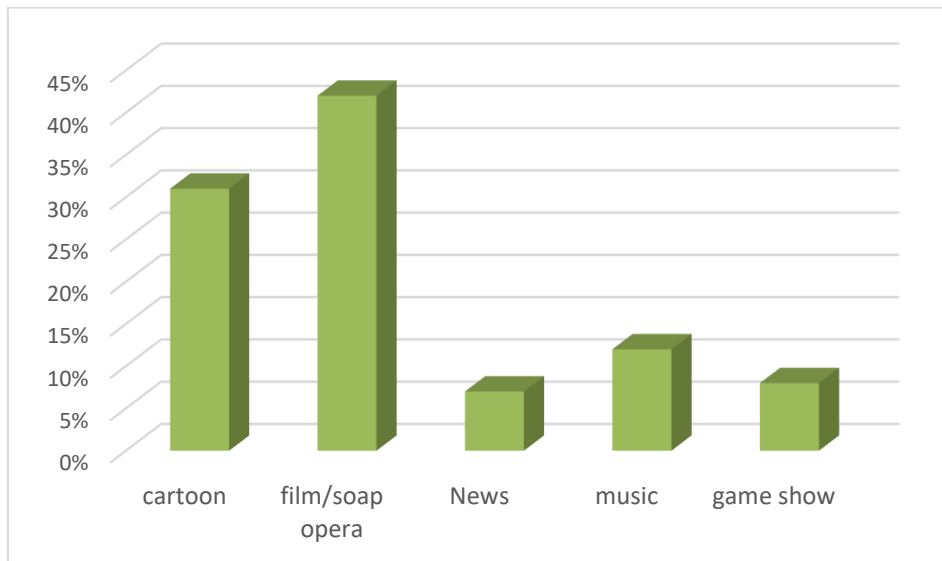


Figure 2. Shows That Children Often Access Television Media

The frequency of informants watching marks the activity of watching television in a week. Most respondents watch every day. So there is no day without watching. This is evident from the answers of informants who watch as many as 69 people daily, or 88.46%. Indications are that when most children watch television every day, it is a prevalent finding. This concern is behind this study because the negative impact of television is caused by toxins that show on television. There are at least seven types of nicotine poison television if it contains elements of gambling, pornography, violence, romance, supernatural, advertising and mysticism. However, nine people claim to watch TV 3 times a week. They spend hours in front of a sailing / monitored box to devour all the messages "crammed" by the mass media industry.

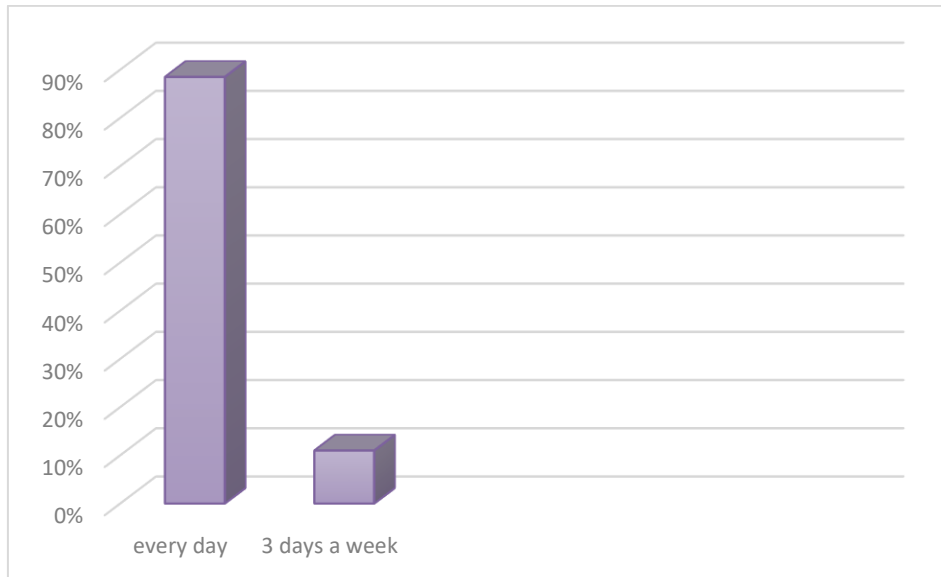


Figure 3. Viewing Frequency

Regarding viewing frequency, it turns out that the viewing time per day they do is Monday-Friday at 12.01-16.00, chosen by 65 people or 53.72%. This means that watching activities are carried out after school. So on Saturday-Sunday, children's viewing time activity was highest at 09.01-12.00; this was responded to by 41 children or 33.88%. At that hour, television shows are generally for children in the form of reality shows, cartoons and even games. However, it turns out that there are also children who are not allowed to watch by their parents on Monday-Sunday, but the number is minimal at around 1%. In addition, friends watching children's answers are pretty varied, namely accompanied by the father and mother as many as 39 people or 32.23% and accompanied by other family members, as many as 44 people or 36.36%. The viewing activity turned out to be relatively high, too, namely 38 people or 31.40%.

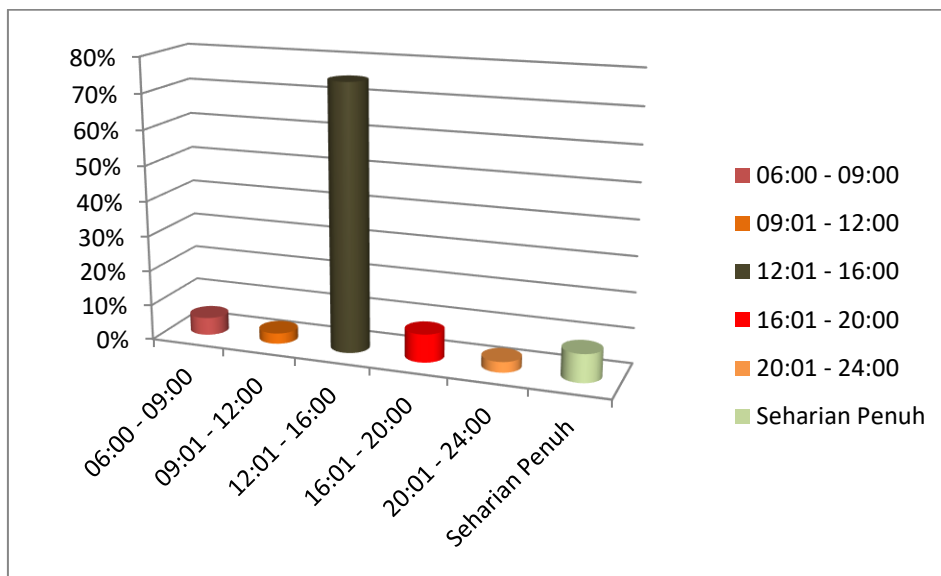


Figure 4. Kids Screen Time

This finding illustrates that today's children are increasingly familiar with television; some even make television a friend. In addition to television, the Internet is the mass media that is most in demand by children who attend school. There are three bad influences of television in general: physical health, psychological health, and social health (difficulty in socializing). The importance of making children concerned about accessing media is because children of elementary school age can also be called the age of conformity. Which is characterized by the following signs:

- a. Children begin to be able to socialize in the school environment and around the house.

- b. Children are more familiar with their environment.
- c. The child feels more independent and takes care of himself.
- d. The child begins to compare everything in the house with the ones he encounters outside.
- e. Children begin to judge that moral norms that were once absolute at home have now become relative.
- f. Children tend to hang out with peers of the same sex, same language style, same lifestyle.
- g. Children learn to submit to the will of the crowd.

Despite these psychological characteristics, physical children of primary school age (and equivalent) overgrow. Especially in the child's family, there is enough food, clothing and shelter. At the end of childhood (around 12-13 years for women and 14-15 years for men), sexual maturity occurs, so parental attention and concern for children is needed so that in the future, children can be appropriately guided. No guidance from mass media or an environment that is not necessarily good and beneficial for the child's future. Observing these characteristics, parents and teachers can take a role so that as an extension of parents of parents who entrust their children to school, teachers carry the mandate to be actively involved in supervising what children watch.

Media literacy is motivated by the freedom of communication and incessant exposure to information in various media, plus it is not balanced with the ability to consume it and weak parental supervision of children who watch television or access the Internet. In this study, it was found that concerns about children in consumption are actually not too worrying but need to be aware that the media is now developing towards convergence media, so media literacy does not only apply to television but includes social media summarized on the Internet.

Children who are already familiar with online media need to be equipped with an understanding that the globalization of information today allows someone to know many negative and positive things about anything. Media literacy also emphasizes that each individual media consumer in the community controls media content that may affect consumer culture (Garzón-Artacho et al., 2021; Novarina et al., 2019). Media literacy is a form of empowerment to be able to use media smartly, healthily and intelligently. I do not always consumers understand news content that is increasingly free and worrying. In this study, teachers included consumers who did not understand the concept of media literacy. Socialization of teachers is considered the first step to understanding media literacy because teachers are socialization agents for their students. When children are contaminated with the media, those around them serve as reminders and supervisors of children's communication activities with the media.

This research targets media literacy so that people are educated about media content programs so that they understand, have the knowledge, and have the right to choose the media needed. So that the empowerment of teachers will help the application of media literacy to children, and the result is to give birth to a generation that understands how messages are produced, constructed and impacted.

The impact of media on children is more dangerous when compared to the impact on adults. This is due to children's inadequate level of critical knowledge about media construction. As illustrated in this study, children's television and internet/social media consumption tends to be high. At the same time, parents are generally not so disciplined in limiting children from interacting with these media. This is where the importance of media literacy from an early age for children. Teachers become parties who can contribute a lot to encourage children to understand the adverse effects of media so as not to fall into unwanted impacts.

In addition to TV, the medium that is very close to children today is computers (for the Internet and playing games). For many children, the TV is already considered the third parent, and the computer is the fourth parent (Rózewski et al., 2019). The third and fourth parents are "electronic parents" who, to quote Victor Strasburger, "can teach children good things or bad things." (Naisbitt, 2001). Today, children are much closer to electronic media than ever (Gudmundsdottir et al., 2020). In line with the results of this study, the media that is also very close to today's children is mobile phones. This medium has the ability that it is a compilation of various electronic equipment. TV, games, and the Internet can be accessed via cell phones. In addition, HP can function for SMS, MMS, music players, radio, photo cameras with handycam and photo editors, video calls, GPS, maps, compasses, remote controls, voice recorders, clocks, alarms, stopwatches, calculators, notes, code storage, data storage, calendars, timers, Bluetooth, infrared, and others.

The emergence of various negative impacts due to the use of media, in general, can be seen as a result of parents' lack of understanding in regulating and bridging children's interactions with the media (especially television). Parents and teachers feel helpless in the face of this problem. They put more hope on the role

of the government and the TV broadcasting industry to redesign their broadcast programs that are by Indonesian values and culture so that they do not adversely affect children (Nash, 2024). This attitude of powerlessness must be eroded by realizing that the key is not in the other person or party but in the parent and the child himself because both the government and the TV broadcasting industry are two parties that, at this time, cannot be expected and will not be able to meet parents' expectations.

D. Conclusion

Efforts to protect children from the negative influence of the media due to rapid changes in media life in Indonesia make media literacy skills necessary. In general, the findings of this study are that children's activities on television and social media have not entered a very alarming level. However, the data shows that the potential for a more worrisome direction is likely. So that with the information netted from questionnaires and interviews, media literacy activities must be carried out immediately to make children aware of the dangers of media, both mass media and digital media. This is done because life now is undoubtedly inseparable from media access; everywhere, the media surrounds audiences in various forms. As seen in this study, sources of information for children can be in the form of television and internet media, which is very wide-reaching. At the school level, in addition to standing as its own subject, media education can be integrated into several subjects, such as history, science, social studies, and language and literature. For this reason, in this activity, in addition to children who become databases, teachers also play an essential role in realizing children who are critical of the media. School-based media literacy education in Bengkulu, especially in research locations, has not been carried out as has been done in several regions in Indonesia, namely, being part of the curriculum. Understanding media literacy should start with parents and schools. Media literacy can be included in the curriculum because the learning is efficient. Of course, the initial stage starts with socialization first so that teachers can really understand what the media literacy movement is and are expected to be able to apply it in learning.

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