



## Digital Literacy and Wise Language Use in Online Spaces: A Qualitative Study of Online Communities in Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital technologies has significantly transformed communication, particularly in online spaces where people engage in diverse forms of interaction. In Indonesia, online communities have become central to shaping public discourse and social norms. However, the increasing reliance on digital platforms raises concerns about digital literacy and the responsible use of language. This study explores the role of digital literacy and wise language use within online communities in Indonesia, focusing on how individuals navigate online interactions and the implications of their language practices. The aim of this research is to examine how members of online communities in Indonesia exhibit digital literacy and how they incorporate wise language use in their interactions. A qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured interviews and content analysis of online communication, was employed to collect data from members of various online communities. The results revealed that while most participants demonstrated strong digital literacy skills, there was a notable variance in the application of wise language use. Some members employed respectful and thoughtful language, while others exhibited aggressive or harmful communication. In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of fostering both digital literacy and wise language use to improve the quality of online interactions. Recommendations for promoting these skills in online communities are discussed.

**Keywords:** Digital Literacy, Online Communities, Wise Language

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid expansion of digital technologies in recent decades has radically transformed the way people communicate and interact. Particularly in online spaces, this shift has introduced new challenges and opportunities for individuals to engage with one another across different platforms (Muscat dkk., 2025; Progga & Rubya, 2025). In Indonesia, the rise of digital platforms and online communities has not only facilitated the exchange of information but has also significantly shaped social interactions, public discourse, and cultural norms. Social media, online forums, and digital platforms have created spaces where individuals can discuss various topics, express opinions, and engage in collective conversations. However, the increasing prevalence of these digital spaces has led to growing concerns about how individuals navigate these spaces, particularly regarding their digital literacy and language use.

Digital literacy, broadly defined as the ability to effectively and critically navigate, evaluate, and create information using a range of digital technologies, has become a vital skill for participating in online communities. Simultaneously, the importance of wise language use – the ability to communicate thoughtfully, respectfully, and ethically – has emerged as a critical issue in fostering positive online environments. Indonesia, with its diverse linguistic, cultural, and social landscape, provides a unique context for studying the intersection of digital literacy and language use in online spaces (Hu & Xiao, 2025; Jones & Cooper-Novack, 2025). The quality of interactions in these online communities significantly impacts both individual relationships and the broader societal discourse. As such, understanding how digital literacy and language use interact within these spaces becomes essential to cultivating healthier online environments in the country.

While digital technologies and online spaces have fostered increased communication and collaboration, they have also led to concerns about the quality of these interactions, especially regarding language use (Amro & Iversen, 2025; Magnifico & Jones, 2025). The proliferation of online platforms has made it easier for individuals to communicate, yet it has also created a space where harmful language, misinformation, and negative behavior can easily spread. In many online communities, the lack of thoughtful and ethical communication has resulted in toxic environments that may damage relationships, hinder productive discussions, and contribute to misinformation. Indonesia, with its growing online population, is not exempt from these challenges. Despite the increasing use of digital platforms, there is limited understanding of how digital literacy impacts individuals' ability to engage in wise language use in online spaces.

Moreover, much of the existing literature focuses on digital literacy in broader contexts, without addressing the specific challenges that arise within online communities in Indonesia (Davydov, 2025; Tayyem dkk., 2025). Language use in these spaces is crucial in determining the quality of online interaction, yet there is insufficient research on how individuals navigate digital platforms with a sense of responsibility in their language choices. The gap lies in understanding the complex interplay between digital literacy and language use within the Indonesian context. This research aims to

address this gap by investigating the role of digital literacy and wise language use in fostering healthier online communities in Indonesia. By examining how individuals in various online communities use language and demonstrate digital literacy, the study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of these issues in the context of Indonesian online spaces.

The primary aim of this research is to explore how digital literacy influences language use in online communities in Indonesia, with a particular focus on fostering wise language use (Ahmad Nawi dkk., 2025; Jerasa, 2025). This study seeks to examine how individuals exhibit digital literacy and how this competence affects their language choices, particularly in terms of respectful and thoughtful communication. Understanding how digital literacy impacts online behavior is crucial in identifying the factors that contribute to positive or negative online environments. Additionally, the study aims to identify the patterns of wise language use in different online communities, recognizing that individuals engage with these platforms in various ways and for diverse purposes. By analyzing these behaviors, this research will contribute to understanding the broader impact of digital literacy on societal discourse and social norms in the digital age.

Furthermore, the study intends to provide insights into how digital literacy and wise language use intersect and how they can be cultivated within Indonesian online communities. In doing so, it aims to offer practical recommendations for enhancing digital literacy education and fostering responsible language practices. By focusing on a qualitative analysis of online communication, the study will explore how different types of online interactions – from discussions to debates – contribute to shaping the overall communication climate in Indonesian online spaces (McDaniel, 2025; Zhang dkk., 2025). The research ultimately seeks to help educators, policymakers, and online community managers develop strategies to improve online communication by integrating digital literacy and ethical language use into the digital engagement practices of Indonesian users.

Existing literature on digital literacy has largely addressed its general importance in education and communication but has overlooked how it specifically affects language use in online communities (Filipeti & Mumelaš, 2025; Hollimon dkk., 2025). While numerous studies have focused on digital literacy as a skill for navigating online environments, fewer have examined its connection to language use and ethical communication in digital spaces. Most research in the field of online behavior tends to focus on technical literacy or information management, with little attention given to how individuals use language responsibly and thoughtfully in online discourse. In particular, there is a lack of studies investigating this issue within the Indonesian context, where cultural and linguistic diversity significantly shapes how individuals engage in digital communication.

Moreover, studies on language use in online communities often address issues like online harassment, misinformation, and digital bullying but fail to explore how these problems could be mitigated by enhancing digital literacy and promoting wise language use (Coelho dkk., 2025; Mrva-Montoya dkk., 2025). The need to understand the ways in which individuals apply digital literacy skills to improve language use in online

interactions is pressing, as this could significantly impact the nature of online communities and the quality of discourse. As Indonesian society continues to embrace digital technologies, there is an urgent need to explore how digital literacy and language use intersect to create more positive and constructive online spaces (Chen dkk., 2025; Min dkk., 2025). This research will fill the gap in the literature by specifically focusing on the role of digital literacy and wise language use in Indonesian online communities, offering fresh insights into how these factors can contribute to the cultivation of healthier online environments.

This study is novel in its focus on the intersection of digital literacy and wise language use within the context of Indonesian online communities. While previous research has explored digital literacy and online language use separately, this research addresses both factors together and emphasizes their combined impact on online behavior (Barker dkk., 2025; Baú, 2025). Additionally, it focuses on the unique challenges and opportunities presented by Indonesia's diverse online landscape. Unlike studies conducted in more homogenous digital spaces, the Indonesian context, with its cultural and linguistic diversity, provides a unique opportunity to examine how digital literacy and language use evolve in a multilingual and multicultural environment.

The importance of this research lies in its potential to inform the development of more effective strategies for promoting digital literacy and ethical communication in online spaces. As Indonesia continues to experience rapid digital transformation, understanding how to improve language use and foster digital literacy is crucial for maintaining a positive online environment (Bogic dkk., 2025; Xie & Mo, 2025). This study is justified not only by its contribution to the academic field but also by its potential to offer practical solutions for online community managers, educators, and policymakers. By emphasizing the role of wise language use in conjunction with digital literacy, this research advocates for a more responsible and respectful digital culture, which is essential for fostering productive and meaningful online interactions (Kankanamge dkk., 2025; Rocque dkk., 2025). The findings will offer valuable insights for future interventions aimed at improving online communication and enhancing the overall quality of digital spaces in Indonesia.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research design for this study is qualitative in nature, utilizing a case study approach to explore how digital literacy and wise language use manifest within online communities in Indonesia (Herdiyeni dkk., 2025; Pontillas, 2025). The case study approach allows for an in-depth investigation of specific online communities, providing rich and contextual insights into participants' behaviors, interactions, and language use. This method is well-suited for examining the nuanced dynamics of digital literacy and language use, as it focuses on understanding the experiences and perspectives of individuals within their natural online settings (Molin-Karakoç, 2025; Verma dkk., 2025). The study employs a combination of semi-structured interviews and content analysis of online communication to gather comprehensive data on participants' online interactions and language practices.

The population for this study consists of active members of various online communities in Indonesia, including social media groups, discussion forums, and online support platforms (Flynn, 2025; Sridhar & King, 2025). These communities vary in terms of topics and engagement, ranging from general interest groups to specialized forums related to education, technology, and culture. A purposive sampling technique is used to select participants who are actively involved in these communities and demonstrate varying levels of digital literacy (Kwon & Lynch-Kimery, 2025; Riley dkk., 2025). This ensures that the sample includes a diverse range of participants who can provide insights into the different ways digital literacy and language use are applied in online interactions. The final sample consists of 30 participants, selected based on their active participation in online communities, willingness to engage in the study, and ability to provide meaningful contributions to the research.

The primary instruments used for data collection are semi-structured interviews and content analysis (Hutchinson dkk., 2025; Sridhar & King, 2025). The semi-structured interviews allow for flexible and open-ended discussions with participants, enabling the researcher to explore their experiences, perceptions, and practices regarding digital literacy and language use in online spaces. The interview guide includes questions related to participants' understanding of digital literacy, their experiences with online communication, and their views on the role of language in shaping online interactions. In addition to interviews, content analysis is conducted on selected posts and interactions from the online communities under study. This analysis focuses on identifying patterns in language use, the application of digital literacy skills, and the presence of wise language practices such as respect, empathy, and ethical communication.

Data collection procedures involve a multi-step process. First, participants are recruited through an online announcement posted in the selected communities. After obtaining informed consent, participants are interviewed individually using a semi-structured format, either through online video calls or written questionnaires, depending on participant preferences. Interviews are audio-recorded with permission, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed for recurring themes related to digital literacy and language use. Concurrently, content from online community posts is collected over a period of one month to ensure a representative sample of interactions (Hussain, 2025; Sack dkk., 2025). The posts are selected based on their relevance to the study's objectives and their potential to reflect the diverse language practices within the communities. Once the data is gathered, thematic analysis is applied to identify key themes, patterns, and relationships between digital literacy and language use. This analysis is triangulated with the interview data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study gathered data from 30 participants across various online communities in Indonesia, with a focus on their digital literacy levels and language use. The participants' age ranged from 18 to 45 years, with 60% identifying as students, 30% as professionals, and 10% as part-time contributors. Of the total participants, 70% were

active on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, while 30% were involved in specialized online forums. Digital literacy was assessed using a set of predefined criteria, including familiarity with online tools, ability to discern credible information, and proficiency in navigating various platforms. The results indicated that 80% of participants displayed high levels of digital literacy, while 20% exhibited moderate to low levels.

Table 1. Presents a breakdown of digital literacy levels across

Digital Literacy Level	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
High	24	80%
Moderate to Low	6	20%

The data reveals that most participants have a strong understanding of digital platforms, as evidenced by their ability to effectively engage in online communities. High digital literacy was particularly associated with the ability to identify credible sources of information and engage in discussions on various platforms. This high level of competence in navigating digital spaces suggests that participants are well-equipped to participate in complex online interactions. However, a smaller proportion of participants demonstrated moderate to low digital literacy, indicating gaps in their understanding of certain online tools and resources. These individuals often struggled with differentiating between credible and misleading content, which may affect their overall engagement and communication within online spaces.

The analysis of participants' digital literacy skills revealed that those with higher literacy levels were more likely to engage in responsible and respectful communication. In contrast, participants with lower digital literacy skills tended to exhibit a higher frequency of misunderstandings and engagement in more aggressive or dismissive language. The contrast between these two groups highlights the role that digital literacy plays in shaping the quality of online interactions. It also indicates that enhancing digital literacy could potentially improve language use and communication behavior within online communities, fostering more positive and productive exchanges.

In terms of language use, the study found a distinct variation in how participants communicated within online spaces. Out of the 30 participants, 40% used language that demonstrated a high level of respect and consideration for others, while 50% employed language that was neutral, and 10% displayed aggressive or dismissive language. Those who used respectful language frequently employed polite phrases, acknowledged others' viewpoints, and avoided inflammatory remarks. Neutral language was observed in participants who expressed their opinions without engaging in overly aggressive or confrontational communication, while aggressive language was seen in individuals who used strong, often dismissive terms to express disagreement.

Participants who exhibited wise language use were often involved in discussions that required nuanced understanding, such as debates over societal issues or the sharing of educational content. These individuals demonstrated a commitment to maintaining civil discourse, even in the face of disagreements. On the other hand, those who exhibited aggressive language often participated in less constructive discussions, frequently resorting to personal attacks or divisive rhetoric. This finding emphasizes the

importance of promoting wise language use in online communities to ensure that discussions remain productive and respectful.

The study's inferential analysis focused on the correlation between participants' digital literacy levels and their language use. A significant positive correlation was found between high digital literacy and the use of respectful language. Specifically, participants with higher digital literacy were more likely to engage in thoughtful discussions and use language that promoted constructive dialogue. In contrast, participants with lower digital literacy levels were more inclined to resort to aggressive language, which could be attributed to their difficulty in critically evaluating information and engaging in complex online interactions. This correlation highlights the influence of digital literacy on communication behaviors, suggesting that enhancing digital literacy could lead to more thoughtful and respectful language use in online spaces.

Additionally, the analysis revealed that the type of online community participants engaged with also influenced their language use. Participants in educational and professional communities exhibited a higher tendency to use respectful and constructive language compared to those in entertainment or non-specialized communities. This finding suggests that the nature of the community and the subject matter being discussed play a role in shaping how individuals communicate online. Online communities that encourage intellectual discourse and foster mutual respect seem to promote more responsible language practices.

The relationship between digital literacy, language use, and community engagement was further explored through the participants' patterns of interaction. Participants who were highly engaged in online discussions were more likely to demonstrate wise language use, particularly in educational or professional settings. Those with lower digital literacy tended to participate less frequently or engage in more superficial interactions, where their language use was less thoughtful. This relationship suggests that the level of digital literacy directly impacts not only the quality of language used but also the depth of engagement in online communities. More literate individuals tend to participate in discussions that require careful thought and respectful communication, while those with lower literacy levels are often less involved or exhibit less constructive behavior.

The relationship between language use and digital literacy was also evident in participants' ability to effectively contribute to ongoing conversations. Highly literate participants were more capable of identifying the nuances in language and adapting their communication to suit the context of the discussion. Conversely, less literate participants often struggled to navigate complex topics and resorted to language that was either too simplistic or confrontational. This disparity in communication styles underscores the importance of fostering both digital literacy and wise language use to enhance the quality of online interactions and community engagement.

One case study in particular highlights the impact of digital literacy and wise language use within an online educational community. A participant, "Ariana," who demonstrated high digital literacy, frequently contributed to discussions on language learning techniques and educational policies. Her posts consistently exhibited respectful

language, often acknowledging different perspectives and encouraging others to engage in meaningful debate. Ariana's ability to navigate complex topics and engage respectfully with others was indicative of her high digital literacy. Her contributions were well-received, and she was considered a positive influence within the community.

In contrast, another participant, "Budi," displayed lower digital literacy and participated less frequently in the educational discussions. When he did contribute, his posts often contained aggressive language, questioning the credibility of others without providing substantial evidence. Budi's posts were often dismissed by other community members, and his language use was seen as a barrier to productive conversation. This case study illustrates how digital literacy directly influences language use and community engagement, emphasizing the need for digital literacy education to foster more thoughtful and respectful communication within online spaces.

The findings from the case study provide a clear example of how digital literacy affects not only the quality of communication but also the overall success of an individual within an online community. Participants like Ariana, who demonstrated both high digital literacy and wise language use, were able to contribute meaningfully to discussions and were respected by others in the community. This respect was not only for her knowledge but also for her ability to engage with others in a thoughtful and civil manner. On the other hand, participants like Budi, whose digital literacy was lower, struggled to engage in meaningful discourse and were often met with resistance from others due to their aggressive communication style.

This case study reinforces the notion that digital literacy is not just about the technical skills required to navigate online platforms but also about the cognitive and social abilities to engage in responsible and respectful communication. It also highlights the role of online communities in shaping the way individuals use language, suggesting that communities that prioritize digital literacy and wise language use can foster more positive and productive interactions.

In summary, the data indicates a clear relationship between digital literacy and wise language use in online communities. Participants with higher digital literacy demonstrated a greater ability to engage in thoughtful, respectful communication, while those with lower literacy levels were more likely to use aggressive or dismissive language. These findings suggest that promoting digital literacy is essential for improving the quality of online discourse, particularly in communities that focus on education and professional development. The study highlights the importance of fostering both digital literacy and ethical communication practices to ensure that online spaces remain productive, respectful, and conducive to meaningful discussions.

The results of this study indicated a strong correlation between digital literacy and wise language use within online communities in Indonesia. The majority of participants demonstrated high levels of digital literacy, which enabled them to navigate various online platforms effectively, identify credible information, and engage in meaningful interactions. Participants who exhibited higher digital literacy were more likely to use respectful, thoughtful language in their communications, particularly in educational and professional online communities. In contrast, those with lower digital literacy levels were more prone to aggressive or dismissive language, which impacted the overall



quality of online interactions. The study also highlighted that the type of online community influenced language use, with communities focused on education and professional matters fostering more respectful communication compared to entertainment-based or general-interest communities.

These findings align with previous research that suggests a direct relationship between digital literacy and the quality of online communication. Studies have indicated that individuals with higher digital literacy are better equipped to navigate complex online interactions and are more likely to engage in responsible and ethical language use (Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2014). However, the current study extends this body of knowledge by emphasizing the specific context of Indonesia, where cultural and linguistic diversity plays a significant role in shaping online interactions. Unlike some Western studies that focus on homogenous digital spaces, this research highlights the challenges faced by Indonesian users in balancing language use across different social and cultural contexts. The study also contributes to the growing body of literature on digital literacy by examining its impact not only on information processing but also on the ethics and responsibility of language use in online spaces.

The results of this study suggest that digital literacy is not merely a technical skill but also a critical component of ethical and effective communication in online environments. The finding that individuals with higher digital literacy engage in more respectful language implies that digital literacy includes not only the ability to use digital tools but also the cognitive and social competencies necessary to participate responsibly in online communities. This observation signals a need for more comprehensive digital literacy education that goes beyond technical skills and addresses the social and ethical dimensions of online communication. The fact that participants with lower digital literacy used more aggressive or dismissive language may indicate that their struggles with digital tools also contribute to a lack of critical thinking in online discussions, leading to less constructive engagement and, potentially, toxic online environments.

The implications of these findings are significant for educational policy and the design of digital literacy programs. Given that digital literacy influences the quality of language use and engagement in online communities, it is essential to integrate ethical communication practices into digital literacy curricula. Schools and universities in Indonesia should prioritize teaching students not only how to use digital tools but also how to engage respectfully and responsibly in online spaces. Furthermore, policymakers and online community managers can use these findings to develop guidelines and interventions aimed at fostering positive communication within online communities. By promoting digital literacy and wise language use, it is possible to create online environments that encourage civil discourse and reduce the prevalence of harmful language and misinformation.

The results of this study can be attributed to several factors. First, participants with higher digital literacy are better equipped to navigate the complexities of online platforms and are more likely to be aware of the consequences of their language choices. These individuals are familiar with the ethical implications of their communication and are thus more inclined to use language that fosters positive and

respectful engagement. On the other hand, participants with lower digital literacy may not fully understand the nuances of online communication and may struggle with evaluating the credibility of information. This lack of understanding can lead to more impulsive or aggressive language use, as individuals may not fully grasp the impact of their words on others in the digital space. Additionally, the cultural context of Indonesia, with its diverse languages and social norms, may also influence how individuals approach communication in online spaces.

Moving forward, there is a clear need for future research to further explore the relationship between digital literacy and language use in a broader range of online communities in Indonesia. Researchers should consider examining specific factors such as the role of cultural and social identity in shaping online communication and how different types of digital platforms (e.g., social media, discussion forums, and educational platforms) may influence language use differently. Moreover, educational interventions aimed at enhancing digital literacy must be tested and evaluated to determine the most effective strategies for promoting wise language use. It is also essential for online communities to collaborate with educators and policymakers to create inclusive, respectful, and ethical spaces that promote positive communication. Finally, as digital technologies continue to evolve, ongoing efforts to assess the impact of new platforms and tools on language use will be crucial for ensuring that online communities remain conducive to productive and respectful dialogue.

## **CONCLUSION**

The most significant finding of this study is the clear relationship between digital literacy and wise language use in online communities in Indonesia. While prior research has explored digital literacy and language use separately, this study reveals how high digital literacy correlates with respectful and thoughtful communication in online spaces, particularly in educational and professional communities. Participants who demonstrated higher digital literacy were better able to navigate complex digital tools and engage in more constructive, ethical communication. This finding offers a fresh perspective on the role of digital literacy in promoting positive online interactions, highlighting its importance not only for navigating platforms but also for fostering civil discourse.

The contribution of this research lies in both the conceptual framework and methodological approach. The study advances the understanding of digital literacy by expanding it beyond the mere ability to use digital tools, framing it as a broader set of cognitive and social skills necessary for responsible and respectful online communication. Additionally, the qualitative methodology employed in this research, using in-depth interviews and content analysis, provides nuanced insights into the ways individuals engage in online communities and the language they use. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the contextual factors influencing digital literacy and language use, particularly within the Indonesian sociocultural context, which has been underrepresented in the literature.

This research has several limitations that offer opportunities for further exploration. The study's sample size and focus on specific types of online communities

may not fully represent the diversity of digital interactions across Indonesia. Future research should examine a broader range of communities, including those in rural or less digitally connected regions, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how digital literacy and language use vary across different populations. Moreover, while this study focused on online communication within educational and professional communities, similar research could explore other areas, such as political discourse or social movements, to assess how digital literacy impacts communication in those contexts. Expanding the scope and sample of future studies would provide a richer, more generalizable understanding of these issues in the broader digital ecosystem.

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