

Safe Social Media Use by Upholding Ethics

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia is widely recognized for the friendliness of its people. However, in 2021, Microsoft released a survey ranking Indonesia as the least friendly country in the online environment. This finding suggests a decline in ethical behavior in society, particularly in the context of social media use. To address this issue, a Community Service Program was conducted in the form of educational outreach and interactive discussions regarding the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law), particularly the articles most frequently applied in legal cases, as well as Islamic perspectives that reinforce the key principles of the law. The activity aimed to increase awareness and understanding of ethical behavior in social media use. The results showed that participants actively engaged in discussions and demonstrated the ability to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior related to social media ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is well known for the friendliness of its citizens. This is supported by a 2024 Internations survey (as cited in CNNIndonesia.com, 2024), which ranked Indonesia second among the friendliest countries, with Costa Rica in first place. The survey also positioned Indonesia fourth in the ease-of-settling index. However, a 2021 survey suggests that Indonesian friendliness may be more evident offline than online. Microsoft's *Digital Civility Index*, which measures online politeness, ranked Indonesia as the least polite country in Southeast Asia.

These contrasting survey results have sparked ongoing debate. While some argue that friendliness remains a core societal value, others express concern about the erosion of moral character, particularly in digital spaces. Concerns about declining online ethics should not be underestimated. This study focuses specifically on social media, as a recent report on Indonesia's digital literacy status by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics and Katadata Insight Center identified instant messaging and social media as the most dominant forms of internet use.

A notable study further emphasizes the importance of this issue by demonstrating that social media activity footprints can reflect individuals' real-life personalities. This finding highlights the importance of ethical behavior on social media, particularly for stakeholders in the education sector. One major concern is the declining awareness of ethical conduct, despite the substantial benefits ethics provide. Magnis-Suseno (1987) identified seven societal benefits of ethics:

1. Orientation toward morality and truth, guiding individuals to avoid deviant behavior.
2. Addressing injustice and inequality by emphasizing equal rights and rejecting discrimination.
3. Maintaining social relationships and fostering harmony among individuals.
4. Promoting collective welfare through decisions that benefit society.
5. Supporting personal and character development, including integrity and cooperation.
6. Providing moral guidance that helps minimize behavioral deviations.
7. Enhancing quality of life by fostering mutual care, safety, and comfort.

Indonesia's low ranking in online civility, combined with evidence of the relationship between online and offline behavior, motivated the implementation of a Community Service Program titled "*Safe Social Media Use by Upholding Ethics*", aimed at increasing public awareness.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

The Community Service Program applied an educational outreach approach focusing on the 2024 Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law) and Islamic perspectives on ethical social media use. These topics were selected because both emphasize ethical principles. According to Mufid (2015), ethics is a discipline concerned with distinguishing right from wrong and is closely related to societal morality.

Because perceptions of right and wrong may be subjective, objective and binding guidelines are necessary. Therefore, these topics were selected due to their legal authority and widespread acceptance in regulating social media behavior. The ITE Law materials covered:

1. Article 27A (defamation)
2. Article 28 paragraph 2 (incitement of hatred)
3. Article 29 (threats)
4. Article 45A (false information harming consumers)

Islamic perspectives addressed similar prohibitions, including defamation, incitement of hatred, threats, and the dissemination of false information, particularly in commercial contexts. Following the presentation, participants were given examples of public figures prosecuted under these articles to illustrate that both influential individuals and ordinary citizens are subject to legal consequences. The session concluded with an interactive question-and-answer discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the predetermined topic, the team then looked for a suitable location that aligned with the planned activities. We searched through the internet, mass media, and colleagues. From this search, we eventually connected with one of the foundations, Yayasan Roemah Tawon. The reason we were interested in the foundation was that it is known to have been established by a street singer who has a strong interest in education and cares deeply about fellow street performers. (Hodawya, & Carina, 2019)

The team then decided to directly visit the location to build rapport and learn more about Roemah Tawon. Before visiting, we searched for contact information through the foundation's Instagram page and obtained a reachable phone number. After contacting the number, we were given a date for the visit and eventually arrived at the location. Upon arrival, we explained our intention to carry out a community service program with the topic of ethics in cyberspace. As a result of the meeting, we gained a better understanding of a Roemah Tawon profile.



Figure 1. The First Day at Roemah Tawon

Roemah Tawon is a non-profit organization that organizes humanitarian activities and focuses on moral education through social, spiritual, and cultural arts. It provides a platform for the nation's children to learn and creatively explore their potential to become individuals with good character. This movement originated from the ideas of four young Vespa enthusiasts and street musicians who converted to Islam after meeting with the Jama'ah Tabligh Islamic outreach activists. The educational movement, initiated at a public transportation stop in Cikokol, Tangerang City, in early 2012, then rented a simple 3x4 meter rental across the Tanah Tinggi train tracks in Tangerang City. Finally, the name ROEMAH TAWON was coined on March 13, 2013, on Jl. Benteng Betawi, Tanah Tinggi, Tangerang City. (Hadijah, personal communication, 2025)

After two years of activities and social investment, enjoying the beauty of the process, Roemah Tawon finally moved to a more suitable open space, with the blessing of the extended family of the late H: Adih, the landowner (may Allah have mercy on him). In mid-2017, Roemah Tawon was officially recognized by the state as a legal entity providing educational and social activities, as per Decree No. AHU-0313155.AH.01.04 of 2017 from the Minister of Law and Human Rights. (Hadijah, personal communication, 2025)

Although evicted in early 2019, educational activities continue to this day, alongside the flyover, railway tracks, and highlands of Tangerang City. In implementing its programs, the Roemah Tawon Foundation is supported by volunteer educators from academia, communities, and individuals across various professions who share the same vision and mission as the Roemah Tawon Foundation, which aims to contribute to the intellectual development of the nation. Praise be to God, Roemah Tawon is now a community education center, providing educational facilities to accommodate underprivileged communities in general education, spirituality, environmental education, and arts and culture. (Hadijah, personal communication, 2025)

Vision: *To create an intelligent, humane, independent, and well-mannered society.*
(Hadijah, personal communication, 2025).

Mission:

1. To organize educational activities oriented toward spiritual, moral, social, and arts and cultural values.
2. To foster moral character from an early age.
3. To instill a sense of community concern for the environment.
4. Conduct humanitarian activities and provide opportunities for community volunteerism.
5. To empower the community in entrepreneurial activities to achieve family economic independence. (Hadijah, personal communication, 2025)

The selection of Roemah Tawon as the location for the community service program stems from its founders' noble ideals to improve education for both street singers and the surrounding population. The founders' noble ideals align with the program's objectives. With these ideals in mind, the team, when visiting the location, was willing to involve various age groups in the program. These groups ranged from elementary, middle, and high school children to their parents.

Foundation proceeded smoothly and received enthusiastic participation. The outreach consisted of multiple stages involving material delivery and active interaction with participants. The activity began with an opening by a student master of ceremonies, followed by remarks and a lecture supported by PowerPoint presentations and audiovisual tools. However, before the resource person presented their material, a welcoming speech was delivered from Roemah Tawon, expressing their gratitude for entrusting Roemah Tawon as the venue for the activity. They also expressed their enthusiasm for the topic being presented. (Hadijah, personal communication, 2025).



Figure 2. The Event Start at 1 PM

After the host's welcome, the next event was for the speaker providing material starting from the development of information technology. It was explained that in the past, humans communicated through letters, then continued by sending messages via radio, television, and now switching to social media. The presentation presented in the social media material began with a definition, namely a form of digital communication that facilitates interaction between individuals through the internet network, allowing users to create, share, and participate in content virtually. It was also explained that social media is a platform on the internet that allows users to communicate, interact, share information, and form social bonds virtually with other users. (Nasrulloh, 2015)



Figure 3. The Speaker is Starting the Session

Next, the presenter also explained the types of social media, namely:

1. Social Networking. Social media allows users to build new social networks. This is because it makes it easy for people to connect with others who share similar characteristics and interests.
2. Blogs. These are social media platforms used to share daily life stories, opinions, and other topics through relatively long posts.
3. Microblogging. This is a type of social media platform similar to a blog but with a character limit.
4. Media Sharing. This is a social media platform that allows users to share content and information with other users.
5. Social Bookmarking. This is a feature provided by social media platforms that allows users to save and organize information obtained from their online activities.
6. Wiki. This is a social media platform that functions like a digital encyclopedia, allowing users to search for and edit information. (Nasrulloh, 2015)

After that, the next presentation focused on the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE), particularly the articles concerning defamation, hoaxes, threats, and incitement of hatred. The material also mentioned public figures who were prosecuted under these articles, such as with initial GG who was imprisoned due to a defamation case, and AD, who was jailed for inciting hatred. GG was sentenced to 2 years and 4 months in prison for defaming someone. The perpetrators were not only him, but also the YouTube account owner and the interviewer involved. This case can serve as a lesson for everyone to exercise self-control and avoid defaming others, not only in the real world but also in cyberspace. Furthermore, the case acts as a warning for all social media users to be careful when creating content. (Marvela, 2020)

Next is AD. The AD case began when he intended to lead a declaration in one of the cities in East Java but was blocked by certain individuals. To vent his anger, he used the word “idiot” toward the crowd surrounding him in a vlog video. As a result of the video, he was reported to the police and sentenced to 9 months in prison. However, the 9-month sentence was later reduced by 6 months, leaving him with only 3 months of imprisonment. (Tempo.co, 2019). The AD case reminds us of how important it is to control our emotions when anger arises, including refraining from using harsh words. This serves as an important reminder because nowadays many public figures freely use offensive language, especially on social media. Such behavior reflects poor character, as it can be imitated by viewers, particularly underage audiences.

This was intended to enhance the participants’ media literacy. After the presentation about artists who were prosecuted under the ITE Law, the next session was a case study activity. During this activity, the MC read out a case, and participants who answered were given a prize.

For the first case example, if I am being recorded on video and someone begins to talk about another person’s bad traits, what should be done? The MC then provided answer choices:

- a. Join in discussing the other person’s bad traits,
- b. Ask a friend to turn off the video and then continue talking about that person’s bad traits,
- c. Ask to turn off the video and advise the friend not to talk about other people’s bad traits.

Second case study: A friend owes us money and has not repaid it what should be done? The answer choices are:

- a. Threaten the person with options that might frighten them into paying immediately,
- b. Spread the person’s disgrace to others,
- c. Approach the person directly and explain that we currently need the money back.

Third case study: We are in need of money and have several pairs of shoes to sell, so we look for ways to sell them quickly. Which approach is most appropriate?

The choices are:

- a. Search for attractive shoe photos on Google to make people trust and buy the shoes being sold.
- b. Take original photos and post them on social media as they are.
- c. Ask someone else to lie and provide information that does not match the facts.

After the case study session, the next agenda was the presentation of the Islamic perspective. Islamic perspectives addressed similar prohibitions, including defamation, incitement of hatred, threats, and the dissemination of false information, particularly in commercial contexts. The Islamic perspective taken from defamation is Surah Al Hujurat verse 12 and the hadith which calls for not exposing other people's disgrace. Furthermore, regarding threats, the Islamic perspective is taken from HR MUSLIM, which says that God will give extraordinary fear on the Day of Judgment. Then, for incitement to hatred, the

Islamic perspective taken is Al Hujurat verse 11 and the hadith which says that a believer is not someone who insults a lot, speaks dirty, behaves cruelly, or curses a lot, on HR Tirmidhi. Last, regarding false information, Islamic perspective is taken from An-nur verse 24, and Al-Hujurat verse 6



Figure 4. A Photo Group with Participant

After the session, participants demonstrated improved understanding of the scope of the ITE Law. They became more aware that posting offensive comments or sharing unverified information may constitute legal violations. Additionally, jokes containing threatening elements may potentially lead to legal consequences. Participants, particularly mothers attending religious study groups, showed increased enthusiasm when reminded that religious teachings also regulate these ethical principles. The discussion session allowed participants to ask questions and share perspectives on real-life cases. One participant asked how to advise family members to avoid sharing unverified information.



Figure 5. A photo Groups with Representatives from Roemah Tawon

After all activities were completed, the event series was closed with a group photo together with representatives from Roemah Tawon and all staff members. We also asked for suggestions and feedback regarding the activities that had been carried out, which were submitted to the representative of Roemah Tawon. The evaluation document is in the form of photos as shown below.

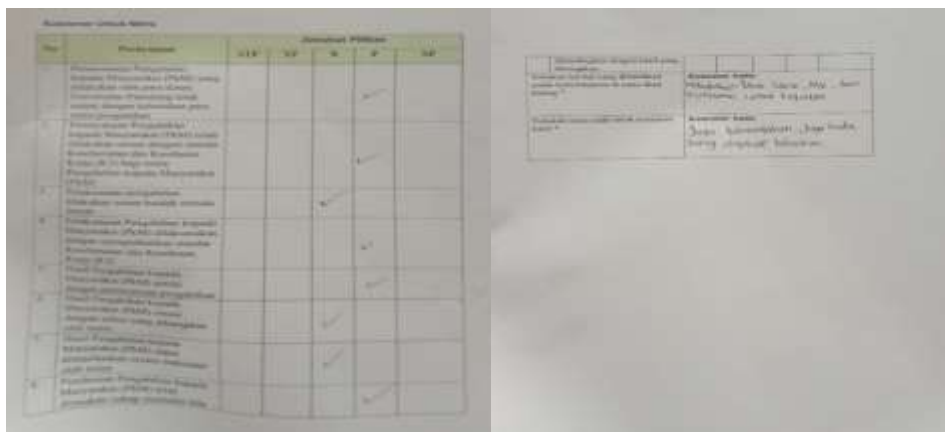


Figure 6. Program Satisfaction Questionnaire

The final evaluation indicated that most participants gained new and relevant knowledge and understood the importance of digital media and its regulatory framework.

Key Discussion Points

1. The importance of thinking before acting on social media. Participants demonstrated awareness of considering consequences before responding to negative online interactions.
2. Understanding the ITE Law and religious teachings. Many participants remembered Article 27A and recognized the importance of avoiding disclosure of others' personal shortcomings.
3. Awareness of current issues. Participants recalled recent viral cases involving public figures, indicating active reasoning and engagement during the program.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Community Service Program was successfully implemented and generated positive impressions among both the organizing team and participants. The organizing team expressed satisfaction in sharing knowledge, particularly when participants demonstrated clear understanding of the material. Participants also reported satisfaction due to the combination of lectures, audiovisual support, and interactive discussions.

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