# Online Risks Research in Teenagers: Survey on Teenagers as Social Media Users in Medan

Hendra Harahap and Yovita Sabarina Sitepu

*Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia*

Keyword:     Online Risks, Social media, Teenagers, Medan.

Abstract:    This research aims to find the trend in teenagers while using social media to gratify their information seeking and to knows how about their social media habits. This research specifically want to find the online risks that encountered by them while looking for information through social media. It shows that teenagers' use of social media in Medan still in balance between educational needs, such as: doing assignments and looking for information and entertainment needs (eg. Music, video clip and games). Online risks that experienced by them such as receiving messages that make them scared, exposed by images of sexual videos or photos, seen weebsite where people talk about or share their experiences of taking drugs. Meanwhile, contact risks that have been experienced by the teenagers are from giving their private information to a person they have only had contact with online, to being bullied by online.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Internet has become an integral part of human life in this digital era. People depends on internet for their daily activities such as looking for information, communicating with friends and family, looking for online transportation, buying things that they need in daily life, playing games, entertainment and online bussiness.

The Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJI) releases that in 2017 the number of Indonesian internet users has reach 143.3 million people or 54.6% of Indonesian population. Based on sex, 48.57% users are woman, and 51.43% are male. About 16.68% of the internet total users are students, age between 13-18 year old with an internet penetration of 75.50% (APJII, 2016).

The growth of internet users is supported by the availability internet connections in many countries and so does in Indonesia. The quality of broadband make people become easier to connect with internet everytime and everywhere. Indonesia's mobile phone users have become bigger than its population. Around 308.2 million people (34%) have been connected with internet. The avarage time they are connected with internet is about 2 hours 30 minutes.

Teenagers and pre-teenagers, age between 9-28-year old, are named 'digital generation' (Livingstone, 2011); 'generation next, generation z, net generation' (Tapscot, 2009). Steiner-Adair & Barker (2013) give name to this generation as 'fast-forward children', 'the age of butt-dealing', 'the screen teens' because they are living surrounded by electronic things and virtual world. Internet, games, social media, instant messaging make them experience something that they should not. Something that 'too much, too soon, too fast.'

Dotner (in Livingstone, 2011) gives name as 'cultural pioneers' to this generation because their ability to make new media as a center of inovation, interaction and integration. Inovation because they able to combine many media, do some activities in the same time, make unclear line between production and meaning making, also know how to use every possibilities through new media.

This generation has 8 norms, that are: (1) freedom, because internet gives them a freedom to choose from a lot of options; (2) customization, everything can be adapted with needs and wants; (3) able to investigate accurately; (4) integrity; (5) collaboration; (6) entertainment, everything should make happy; (7) fast; (8) innovation is a part of live (Tapscott, 2009).

Social media is very popular among teenagers. But, their activities on internet can be devided into: explorative, create something, learning, sharing, making networks and even doing something nasty,

mean or unkind to others (Livingstone, 2011). Livingstone explains teenagers online activities, as follow: doing homework (90%), information seeking (94%), send/receive e-mail (72%), playing games (70%), instant messaging (55%), visiting political sites and social problems (55%, +12y.o), downloading music (46%), looking for school information/career (44%, +12y.o), quiz (44%), online shopping (40%, +12y.o), reading news (26%, +12 y.o), looking for advice (25%, +12 y.o), visiting chat room (21%), uploading photos/strories (17%), intentionally visiting porn sites (10%).

The motives of internet using can be groupped into four, that are: looking for information, entertainment and excitement, communication and transaction (buying or selling products).

Although teenagers use internet to do their school tasks, internet activity on teenagers mostly for fullfiling their excitement needs. They learn from their friends how to make a social media account, looking for information, playing online games and visiting porn sites (Qomariyah, 2009).

Many studies about intenet using in teenagers show that internet is like a two-sided sword. At one side is helpful for information source (Livingstone, 2009); useful in learning-teaching process (Bosch, 2009). But,the other side is a negative one such as degradation of student achievement, have contact with someone unknown, visiting porn sites, internet addiction (Cho & Cheon, 2005; Leung & Lee, 2011), and even a death (Livingstone, 2009).

All risks or the negative side as consequences of the internet use and teenagers' exploration on the internet said by Livingstone (2011) as online risks. Online risks are including: contact with pedophilia, exposed by violence, sexual violence, rasism, advertising, cyberbullying, being stalked, harrasment, internet gambling, scam, hurting self like suicide, bulimia, anorexia, and so on.

Online risks are differentiated into: (1) content risks where children/teenagers are not allowed to get messages that not appropriate with their age; (2) contact risks where children in group or individual participate in risk communication; (3) conduct risks where children themselves make a risk content or contact risks (Staksrud & Livingstone, 2009).

Uses and Gratifications theory is used in this research to discover about online risks in Medan teenagers moreover to know and explain how the external and internal factors affect the online risks. From many studies about internet use in teenagers, actually there are not much researches which use the uses and gratifications theory and media uses approach. There are four (4) approaches about online

risks and internet function on children/teenagers based on researches that done before. They are: 1) internet in everyday-life; 2) media literacy; 3) media uses; 4) media effects. Among those researches done before, there is no research using the Uses and Gratifications as an approach or framework.

McQuail (2010) said that media effects can be intended or unintended, as expected or unexpected. Kind of changes caused by media are: 1) intended change, where media can make an intended change; 2) unintended change, where media can make an unintended change; 3) minor change (form or intensity), minimal change happens; 4) facilitate change (intended or not), where media just as a facilitator for the change happens as expected or not; 5) reinforce what exist (no change), where change does not happen but just reinforcing existing beliefs; 6) prevent change, where media intend to prevent the change through slowly delivering idological content so can restrain the unintended change happen.

McQuail (2010) established the typology of media effects based on process and link the intended and unintended with short term and long term effect.those typologies are: 1) planned effect/intended- short term; 2) unplanned effect- short term; 3) planned effect/intended- long term; 4) unplanned effect/unintended-long term.

Typologies that relate with online risks are unplanned/unintended- short term effect, and planned/intended-short term. There are types of effects in those typologies. They are: 1) individual reaction, unpredictable and unplanned consequencies as results of media exposure, such as imitation and learn about agressive and deviant behavior including suicide. McQuail (2010) states that this type of effect is kinds of individual strong emotional respon, sexual arrousal, anxiety and fear; 2) individual respon, a process in which an individu is changing or refuse to change as exposed by messages that are created to affect someone's cognitive, attitude and behavior. Typology relates with online benefit is that media can make a planned intended change and also unplanned one.

Based on the discription how the online risks that teenagers face while using the internet, this research addresses questions, such as:
a. What are the Medan teenagers' motives to access information through social media?
b. How do the Medan teenagers' habits while access the information through social media?
c. What are content risks, contact risks, and conduct risks that Medan teenagers meet while accessing information through social media?

## 2 METHOD

This research is using descriptive quantitative approach. Survey is used to get a whole portrait of online risks in teenagers. Descriptive study aims to give a portrait and an explanation about social reality and the link between variables which relates with that reality.

Teenagers as social media users become the subject of this research. There are some reasons why the teenager is chosen. They are: 1) the intencity of teenager being exposed by social media content is big; 2) the probability of online risks that faced by the teenager in Medan while using social media to fulfill their needs of informations is also big. Total population of teenager aged 15-19 year-old is 216.383 (BPS, Medan in Number 2018). Sampling size is determined by Slovin's with margin error 5.8%. It is found that 296 ($\approx$ 300) as a sampling size.

In detail, this research is studying aspects, as follows:

1. Formats and types of contents that are risky for teenagers as online media users.
2. Socio-demographic characteristics are measured in this research as part of teenagers socio-environment aspects. Indicators of socio-demographic are: level of education (SMP/SMA and class), age, sex, level education of father, level education of mother, utilities that available in their house, and their pocket money per day.
3. The motives of social media use are determined by: (1) expressing opinion and status gaining; (2) social interaction; (3) information seeking; (4) entertainment and pastime.
4. Media habits
5. Online risks: content risks, contact risks and conduct risks.

### 2.1 Data Collection Techniques

1. Survey using questionnaire about online risks is given to 300 teenagers in Medan.
2. Interview is conducted to teenagers who have experience about online risks.
3. Focus group discussion with teenagers to know deeper about their media habits and online risks they have encountered.

### 2.2 Data Analysis

Data is analyzed using:

a) Descriptive statistic analysis to explore motives in using social media, media habits, and online risks that encountered by Medan teenagers.

b) Qualitative analysis to dig deeper about the impacts of online risks in Medan teenagers.

## 3 RESULTS

The Table 1 shows that the use of social media in Medan teenagers is still balance between the needs for education- doing homework and information seeking, and the needs for entertainment (music, watching video clip and playing games). It is also apropriate with the results of the research conducted by Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informasi RI (The Ministry of Communication and Information) and UNICEF (2014) about "Children and Teenager Behavior on Internet Use". It says that 77.4% of teenagers using internet to access social media account, 64.5% relates with educational and doing school tasks, 63.2% to play online game.

Table 1: Motives in using social media.

| No | Motives in using social media | f | % |
|----|-------------------------------|-----|------|
| 1 | Watching video clip | 283 | 94.3 |
| 2 | Music | 296 | 98.7 |
| 3 | Playing games | 264 | 88 |
| 4 | Doing homework | 287 | 95.7 |
| 5 | Sending messages to family/ friend | 298 | 99.3 |
| 6 | Social networking | 282 | 94 |
| 7 | Information seeking | 298 | 99.3 |
| 8 | Uploading photo | 257 | 85.7 |

Smartphone, laptop and mobile phone are media that commonly had by teenagers in Medan. Smartphone using in Medan teenagers now has reach 91.3%. Survey conducted by APJII (2016) shows that desktop computer/laptop ownership in Indonesia has reach 25.75%. Smartphone ownership is 50.8% of total population. Compared with the percentage of medium ownership based on region, 35.5% urban people have desktop computer and 70.98% have smartphone/tablet.

Hendriyani et al., (2012) shows that sex and social economic status affect the correlation between children and media. Sex can predict what media are available in a house or child's room. Games stuffs are more available in boy's room and books are more easy to find in girl's room.

Table 2: Medium ownership.

| No | Medium | f | % |
|----|--------|---|---|
| 1 | Desktop computer/PC | 78 | 26 |
| 2 | Laptop | 203 | 67.7 |
| 3 | Mobile phone | 144 | 48 |
| 4 | Smartphone | 274 | 91.3 |
| 5 | E-book reader | 53 | 17.7 |
| 6 | Home games console | 98 | 32.7 |

Table 3 shows that about 69.3% of teenagers aged 15-18 in Medan access or us internet more than 3 hours per day. The intencity of girl accessing the internet more than 3 hours per day is higher than boy's (75.5%:63.1%). This finding is also parallel with research conducted by APJII (2016) said that the duration of internet use is about 73.5%

Table 3: Avarage time accessing internet per day.

| No | Average time | f | % |
|----|-------------|---|---|
| 1 | < 1 hour | 22 | 6.7 |
| 2 | 1 hour | 22 | 7.3 |
| 3 | 2 hours | 50 | 16.7 |
| 4 | 3 hours | 78 | 26 |
| 5 | > 4 hours | 130 | 43.3 |
| | Total | 300 | 100 |

Youtube, Instagram, Whatsapp, Google+ and Facebook are aplications that commonly used by teenagers in Medan. Spesifically, there are 73.7% teenagers who access Facebook, Instagram 72.3%, Youtube 72.1%, Google+ 73.5% and Whatsapp 71%. Moreover, it is found that 76.7% teenagers in Medan access Facebook more than 3 hours per day.

Most of Indonesian smartphone users use their smartphone to access social media. This condition makes Indonesia as the fourth of the biggest country with 130 millions Facebook users, and 70% of those Facebook users are teenagers. There are 46% of Indonesia internet users, aged 15-24, who access Youtube. Moreover, 75% teenagers of Facebook users and 22% of Youtube users access those social media through their smartphone (Global Web Index, 2015).

Table 4: The uses of social media.

| No | Social media | f | % |
|----|-------------|---|---|
| 1 | Facebook | 182 | 60.7 |
| 2 | Instagram | 278 | 92.7 |
| 3 | Youtube | 278 | 93 |
| 4 | Facebook messanger | 125 | 41.7 |
| 5 | Whatsapp | 265 | 88.3 |
| 6 | Twitter | 98 | 32.7 |
| 7 | Google+ | 185 | 61.7 |
| 8 | Tumblr | 65 | 21.7 |
| 9 | Snapchat | 111 | 37 |
| 10 | Pinerest | 102 | 34 |

There are 4 main activities that commonly used by teenagers in Medan while using social media. They are: 1) added people who they only had contact with online into their contact list; 2) change or edit a photo; 3) make a video; 4) join an online discussion.

There is a difference between boys and girls particularly about adding a person they only had contact with online innto their contact lists. Girls (80.7%) tend easier than boys (71.8%) when added a person they only had concact with online into their contact list.

Table 5: Activities on social media.

| No | Activities | f | % |
|----|-----------|---|---|
| 1 | Sign petition | 19 | 6.4 |
| 2 | Share news via Facebook or Twitter | 34 | 11.4 |
| 3 | Give comments on Online news | 35 | 11.7 |
| 4 | Join online discussions | 74 | 24.8 |
| 5 | Write a blog | 22 | 7.3 |
| 6 | Make their own music | 36 | 12 |
| 7 | Make an animation, moving picture or image | 40 | 13.3 |
| 8 | Make a video | 85 | 28.3 |
| 9 | Change or edit a photo | 165 | 55 |
| 10 | Make a drawing or picture | 68 | 22.7 |
| 11 | Added people who only had contact with online into contact list | 229 | 76.4 |
| 12 | Sent a photo/video of self to a person who only have had contact with online | 57 | 29 |

Table 6 shows that there are 56.3% of teenagers who have been received messages that make them scared. Additionally, those kind of messages frequently received by teenagers (16%).

Table 6: Receive something that makes them scared.

| No | Receive something that makes them scary | f | % |
|----|------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 1 | Always | 11 | 3.7 |
| 2 | Often | 37 | 12.3 |
| 3 | Seldom | 121 | 40.3 |
| 4 | Never | 131 | 43.7 |
| | Total | 300 | 100 |

Table 7 shows that there are 46.3% of teenagers who frequently receive sexual messages. Those messages consist of audio (phone call), video (video call), image (GIF, picture) and text (sms, whatsapp) that contain sexual things.

Table 7: Receive sexual messages.

| No | Receive sexual messages | f | % |
|----|--------------------------|-----|------|
| 1 | Always | 5 | 1.7 |
| 2 | Often | 21 | 7 |
| 3 | Seldom | 112 | 37.6 |
| 4 | Never | 160 | 53.7 |
| | Total | 298 | 100 |

There are 64% of teenagers in Medan who have been exposed by hateful speech with frequency around 27.6%. Lately, website with hateful content is very popular as topic of discussion. Goverment represented by Ministry of Communication and Information with stakeholders are always planning programs which can minimize the impact of hatespeech.

Table 8: Seen websites with hateful content.

| No | Seen websites with hateful content | f | % |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----|------|
| 1 | Always | 10 | 3.3 |
| 2 | Often | 73 | 24.3 |
| 3 | Seldom | 115 | 38.3 |
| 4 | Never | 102 | 34 |
| | Total | 300 | 100 |

Table 9 indicates that 51.3% of teenagers in Medan have seen websites contain a person experience about using drugs.

Table 9: Seen websites contain how to use drugs.

| No | Seen websites contain how to use drugs | f | % |
|----|-----------------------------------------|-----|------|
| 1 | Always | 5 | 1.7 |
| 2 | Often | 7 | 2.3 |
| 3 | Seldom | 76 | 25.3 |
| 4 | Never | 212 | 70.7 |
| | Total | 300 | 100 |

## 4 CONCLUSION

Teenagers in Medan, aged 15-18, access the internet more than 3 hours per day (69.3%). The intencity of internet use in girls is higher than boys. There are several social media sites that frequently visited by them: Youtube, Instagram, Whatsapp, Google+ and Facebook.

Those teenagers that also as students use internet for their educational needs and entertainment. This result is along with research conducted by The Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo RI) and UNICEF (2014) about "Children and Teenagers Behavior on Internet Use" and said that teenagers access social media for educational, doing homework and playing online games.

Forms of online risks that experienced by the teenagers in Medan are: 1) receive messages that make them scared; 2) see and receive sexual messages (text and video); 3) see websites with hateful content (hatespeech); 4) see website that potrays people with eating disorders; 5) see website that contain people share their experience in using drugs; 6) see website that contain how to do suicide; 7) too many adverts on internet.

Forms of contact risks that experienced by the teenagers in Medan are: 1) give their personal data to a person that they had contact with online; 2) being asked to add a person that they do not know into their friend list; 3) some of their personal data was stolen; 4) feeling under pressure to give personal data to someone; 5) cyberbullied; 6) met online contact offline.

## REFERENCES

APJII, 2016. *Infografis Penetrasi dan perilaku pengguna internet indonesia. Survey 2016.* Jakarta. Retrieved from https://www.apjii.or.id/

Bosch, T.E., 2009. Using online social networking for teaching and learning: Facebook use at the University of Cape Town. *South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research, 35*(2), 185-200. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/025001609 03250648

Cho, C.H., & Cheon, H.J., 2005. Children"s exposure to negative internet content: effects of family context, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 49*(4), 488–509. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1207/ s15506878jobem4904

Global Web Index, 2015. Social Media Engagement Report-Summary.

Hendriyani, Hollander, E.H., d'Haenens, L., Beentjes, J.W.J., 2012. Children's media use in Indonesia. *Asian*

*Journal of Communication, 22*(3):1-16 Retrieved from doi:10.1080/01292986.2012.662514

Kementrian Komunikasi dan Informasi RI, 2014. *Siaran pers hasil riset kominfo dan unicef mengenai perilaku anak dan remaja dalam menggunakan internet*. Jakarta.

Leung, L., Lee, P.S.N., 2011. The influences of information literacy, internet addiction and parenting styles on internet risks, *New Media & Society*, *14*(1), 117–136 https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811410406

Livingstone, S., 2011. Internet, Children, and Youth. In M. Consalvo & C. Ess (Eds.), *The Handbook of Internet Studies* (pp. 348–368), Blackwell Publishing Ltd. Sussex, UK.

Mcquail's, D., 2010. *Mcquail's Mass Communication Theory,* Sage Publications Ltd.

Staksrud, E., Livingstone, S., 2009. Children and online risk: powerless victims or resourceful participants? *Information, Communication & Society*, *12*(3), 364–387. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691180802635455

Steiner-Adair, c., Barker, T.H., 2013. *The big disconnect: protecting childhood and family relationships in the digital age*, Harper Business. New York.

Tapscott, D., 2009. *Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing the world*, McGraw Hill. New York.

Qomariyah, A.N., 2009. Perilaku penggunaan internet pada kalangan remaja di perkotaan (Studi deskriptif tentang perilaku penggunaan internet siswa-siswi SMP Negeri 37 Surabaya, SMP IMKA/YMCA-1 Surabaya SMA Negeri 5 Surabaya, SMA Trisila Surabaya. *Thesis*. Universitas Airlangga: Surabaya.