

## THE EFFECT OF PANDEMIC ERA TO STUDENTS' SOCIAL LITERACY SKILLS

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### Abstract

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This paper is aims at understanding on how pandemic might affect students' competency in literacy specifically in regards to their social literacy skills. The data for this research was collected through the examination of junior high school students' weekly portfolio reports and observation of their online class interaction in Jambi Municipality. In addition, the discussion also focuses on four dimensions of social literacy. The findings of this research are analysed under four broad categories namely (1) intellectual skills, (2) cooperation skills, (3) social skills, and (4) social attitudes and values. As the conclusion, it is revealed that the pandemic era due to COVID 19 has significantly affect students' competency in social literacy skills in various aspects.

Keywords: COVID 19 pandemics, literacy skills, social literacy, social distancing policy

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It is already more than one year since the COVID 19 Pandemic has significantly changed the world in almost all aspects, economics, politics, social life and educational policies. One of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that has swept the world for these recent years is the strict limitation of physical interaction through social distancing policies. As described by Muslih (2020) that during the COVID 19 outbreak, the ways of individuals in communicating and interacting with each other by meeting physically are no longer a priority. Due to the the of limited physical interaction policy, the platform of communication and interaction among people have been transformed into meeting virtually in cyberspace. The transformation of communication means is a challenge for all levels of society in the world. For instance, many non-technical works that had usually been done in office buildings were replaced by working remotely through online platform, trading activities which had usually been in offline shops be replaced by virtual market place applications. Apart from that, physical meetings and gatherings were no longer existed. Instead the meetings were transformed into digital meetings through digital applications such as Zoom, Whatsapp, Google Meet and others (Zeng, 2021: Haryati et al., 2021) Any staging activities are also carried out through vdeo channel such as Youtube. In education, this policy resulted in a change of classroom learning system, the ones that had been originally in the form of offline meeting platform to become the online platform. Educational activities that had traditionally carried out in the school building environment for years was replaced replaced with online learning modes.

On the other hand, as quoted from Engzell et al. (2021), school is a place for students to acquire required knowledge and skills for the sake of optimizing their future living. In doing this, improving students' adequate capability in acquiring such competency is an urgent thing to do. One of basic competency to support it is through literacy education. Traditionally, literacy is defined as the ability to read and write. However, literacy nowadays has become an ample view in education. Good literacy ability does not merely relate to the cognitive functions but also affective and psychomotor function as well. Therefore, in literacy education at school, the teaching to know about something is not enough. Students need to learn how to implement their knowledge and skills in their lives. Besides, teachers should also instil students any adequate capabilities to implement such knowledge and skills as well as have certain values and behaviors based on the norms in their communities so that they can adjust themselves in life and create a harmony (Khasanah et al., 2020). In line with that, social literacy



ability refers to students' capability in integrating the knowledge and skills they have gained from school as well as values and beliefs in their social environment. The definition implies that the scope of social literacy is not limited to know how to apply information and knowledge but also to have any required social skills for living in harmony in a society. Thus, the teaching of social literacy at school relates to the development of students' intellectual and intelligence to connect with people around as well as addresses any social social problems and issues. It involves the process of learning any required social knowledge, skills and values as an effort to overcome any potential issues in the communities both in local, regional or even global scope (Arthur et al., 2000; Yohanna, 2020; Masita, 2021).

The United Nation of Education, Scientific, and Culural Organization (UNESCO, 2018) mentions four interrelated essential elements in optimazing students capability in social literacy. They are intellectual skills that refers to a mental operation that allows a person to acquire knowledge, apply knowledge, and control mental processes, social skills relating to specific behaviors that are produced in positive social interactions, and are needed for effective interpersonal communication, cooperative skills that focuses on the skills at certain activities to achieve common goals by helping each other and understanding each other's activities, and personal attitudes and social values that a person belief as a truth in life. The UNESCO further explains that In assessing students' social literacy, there are some indicators have been set. For instance, the ability to identify and define issues, make hypotheses, write conclusions based on information, analyze and synthesize data, distinguish facts and opinions, formulate causal factors, submit opinions from different perspectives, and make value judgment in making decisions can be used as the indicators for students' development of intellectual skills. Additionally, social skills include the ability to social sensitivity, control self, and exchange ideas and experiences with others. Cooperation competences, on the other hand, include the ability to take roles in groups, participate in group discussions, and participate in making group decisions. Last but not least, some indicators for assessing attitudes and social values are to know common values that employed in the society, making decisions involving two choices based on value consideration, knowing guaranteed human rights for all citizens, developing loyalty as citizens, developing respect for the ideals and heritage of the nation, and developing a sense of brotherhood among human beings.

As addressed before, the shifting of offline class into online class has the ways students interact in their social lives. Therefore, it is very important to have clear understanding of students' social literacy. This paper, then, aims at comprehensively exploring the inter-relationship between learning activities through online platforms and the development of students' social literacy.

## 2. METHODS

The investigation took place at a junior high school in Jambi Municipality through the examination of their weekly portfolio reports. This is a qualitative research in which the data is analyzed through narrative analysis. There are five students from Grade eight who become the participants in this study. The data collection method is observation and conducted by observing recorded zoom class to investigate students' class interaction during their online class as well as examining their weekly portfolio reports. Students' weekly reports are in *Bahasa Indonesia* and related to the social issues under the learning material with the topics of "Globalization in the Community" given by the teacher.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As addressed earlier, the results of data analysis in this paper is presented through narrative analysis. Based on the analysis, a number of findings are emerged. In regards to that, the emerging findings are categorized into four broad categories namely (1) intellectual skills, (2) cooperation skills, (3) social skills, and (4) social attitudes and values

The level of students' social literacy in related to their intellectual skills is showed by their ability in identifying and defining social issues under the topics of "Globalization in the Community"

given by the teacher. A number of elements are identified. One of them is students' ability to identify and define social issues related to globalization. From the observation of the recorded video, it appears that the ability arises when the teacher gave task to students to observe and brainstorm examples of globalization in the community. Through the observation of their classroom activities, the students also show their eagerness in developing hypothesis of what issues emerged as the impacts of the globalized world based on the information they have had. The next finding is that when the students are encouraged to make a discussion section, they also enthusiastically share their opinions from various perspectives related to what might cause the emerging issues. At the same page, students' weekly portfolio reports also address the aforementioned topics. The analysis is identified at students' report by distinguishing facts and opinions and making value judgments in formulating conclusions. Based on the analysis of data at this stage, it can be concluded that even though each of them have different levels of participation, the students who become the participants of this research showed adequate social literacy through their intellectual skills.

Apart from the aforementioned factor of intellectual skills, the social literacy of students can also be identified through their cooperation and social skills. Different from the intellectual skills, however, the analytical results in regards to students' cooperation and social skills shows mixed results. Not all participated students who become the participants of this research exhibit adequate skills in relation to how they build cooperation to their classmates during the online class activities; only two out of those five students choose to actively involve in participating in group discussion while the remaining appears to be silent almost all the time. The active students also take role in discussing the topic and participate in making group decisions and presenting them to the class. Similar situation happens to their social skills in which the three students are active while the ones who are not really active during the class discussion appear to avoid exchanging ideas with other group members and one of student is never unmute his zoom microphone at all during the discussion. Despite the differences in regards to their level of activeness, all of those five students show similar results in learning to control themselves as well as respect others' opinion and have social sensitivity; none of them show bad attitude or saying inconvenient words to their classmates or the teacher.

The last type of social literacy is related to their social attitudes and values. The investigation in regards to this type of social literacy confirms that the students do not merely understand existing social issues or problems but are also actively involved in building communities and help solving social problems through their social attitudes and values. These efforts are indicated from their direct participation in the communities as well as in broader aspects of societies. Among the six aforementioned indicators of this type of social literacy, however, not all them are emerged in this research. Instead, only three of them identified from the examples of students' interaction and reports, they are (1) knowing the general rules implemented in society, (2) developing respects to national ideals and heritage in one hand and (3) developing sense of universality and equity among various race and ethnics as exposed. However, the research findings do not automatically mean that the students do not have the remaining three social attitudes and values. There is a high probability that the later elements of attitudes and values of making a decision that involves two choices based on value, knowing guaranteed human rights for all citizens, and developing loyalty as a citizen do not emerged due the factor that those elements do not directly related to the learning material that students learn on that day. This is because the topic on that day is about globalization while the three elements are more closely related to human rights and citizenship.

The results of this research confirm the inter-related correlation among the four elements of social literacy in this digital era as suggested by UNESCO (2018). More specifically, the four elements might change dynamically due to a number of factors; in this case, the influential factor is the physical distance policy during the COVID 19 Pandemic. the research results show that the intellectual skills of students who become the participants of this study are still capable to develop in spite of the limited social interaction during the pandemics. However, students' social literacy development in regards to their cooperative skills and value in socializing and contributing to the societies are not as good as the positive development of their intellectual skills has been discussed

earlier. This has raised a big concern considering that those two sub-skills are also crucial for students to master for the success of their future life. Any possible efforts should be designed and conducted to ensure the better programs of students' well-equipped development of their social literacy skills.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

To summarize, social literacy refers to the capability to use a range of social skills as well as social knowledge to understand and interpret various social problems and challenges. Thus, a person who has good social literacy capability is someone who is capable to integrate and implement his knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in social life. This involves intellectual skills, social skills, cooperative skills and attitudes and values to socialize and contribute to their social environment. Through the analytical results of students' weekly portfolio reports and their interactions during online class, it is identified that those four aforementioned elements of literacy skills are emerged although they are not at the same levels of occurrences. Despite that, the data of this research is only taken from one online meeting and five participants from junior high school students. There is a high probability that with bigger size of data sources as well as more various analytical methods might result more comprehensive findings. Therefore, it is strongly suggested to conduct further research under this topic areas in the future.

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