THE ROLE OF AL AZHAR MEDAN'S LEADING HIGH SCHOOL IN STRENGTHENING DIGITAL LITERACY FOR ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school in strengthening students' digital literacy as an effort to maintain adolescent mental health in the digital era. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques through interviews, observation, and documentation. The results show that the school has a strong commitment to building a culture of digital literacy through the integration of technology into learning, training for teachers, and the formation of a student digital community. Digital literacy is not only understood as technical skills, but also includes ethics, responsibility, and reflective awareness of the impact of social media on psychological well-being. Increased digital literacy has been shown to contribute to reducing levels of stress, anxiety, and social pressure experienced by students. The school implements educational, collaborative, and preventive strategies through programs such as digital well-being seminars, Islamic digital ethics training, and thematic counseling. Challenges faced include limited learning time and the gap in digital skills among students, but these can be overcome through mentoring and collaboration between teachers, students, and parents. This study confirms that strengthening digital literacy plays a crucial role in shaping adolescent character that is resilient, mentally healthy, and responsible in using technology.

Keywords: digital literacy, mental health, adolescents, child-friendly schools, educational technology

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has brought about significant changes in the way people live, learn, and interact, especially among teenagers. Today, most of the younger generation's activities are inseparable from information technology. Increasing access to the internet and social media allows teenagers to explore a wide range of knowledge sources quickly and easily. However, behind these conveniences, new challenges arise that directly impact their mental health and psychological well-being. Teenagers often face an influx of information, social pressure from online platforms, and unhealthy social comparisons. Dependence on devices and exposure to negative content, such as cyberbullying, hate speech, and fake news (hoaxes), pose a real threat to adolescents' emotional and mental well-being. This situation demonstrates that the ability to use technology alone is not enough. Strong digital literacy skills are required so students can select information, think critically, and interact wisely online.

Digital literacy extends beyond the technical ability to operate digital devices; it also encompasses an understanding of ethics, responsibility, and the ability to reflect on the impacts of technology use. Schools, as formal educational institutions, play a crucial role in guiding students to become intelligent and ethical technology users. Strengthening digital literacy in schools can help students understand the limits of digital media use, improve critical thinking skills, and raise awareness of the importance of maintaining mental health in the modern era. Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school is a school that emphasizes not only academic achievement but also a commitment to character development and student psychological well-being. As a school that adapts to changing times, Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school has integrated

digital literacy values into its learning activities and school programs. Teachers and management play an active role in guiding students to use digital media for productive, educational, and positive purposes. Furthermore, the school's environment, grounded in moral and spiritual values, provides a strong foundation for creating a balance between intellectual intelligence and mental resilience. Research on the role of Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school in strengthening digital literacy for adolescent mental health is highly relevant amidst the increasing number of cases of psychological disorders among students due to uncontrolled digital media use. This research aims to provide a concrete overview of school strategies and practices in instilling digital literacy as a preventative measure against adolescent mental health issues. The results are also expected to serve as a reference for other educational institutions in developing similar policies and programs to foster a digitally resilient and mentally and emotionally healthy young generation.

FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM
1. What is the role of Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school in developing digital literacy programs among students?
2. How can the implementation of digital literacy support the mental health of adolescents in the school environment?
3. What factors support and hinder the implementation of the digital literacy program at Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school?
4. To what extent are schools' efforts able to shape students who have digital skills as well as emotional balance in the use of technology?

RESEARCH PURPOSES
1. Identifying the forms of digital literacy programs and activities implemented by Al Azhar Medan's Leading High School in the learning process and non-academic activities.
2. Analyze the strategies of schools and educators in instilling digital literacy values in students, both through online learning, use of digital media, and character guidance.
3. Explains the relationship between strengthening digital literacy and students' mental health, specifically how critical thinking skills, digital ethics, and time management influence adolescents' emotional stability.
4. Assessing the effectiveness of implementing digital literacy in shaping positive behavior, self-confidence, and students' awareness to use digital media in a healthy and responsible manner.
5. Identifying supporting and inhibiting factors for school success in implementing digital literacy programs from the aspects of human resources, infrastructure, and support from the school environment and parents.
6. Formulate practical recommendations for schools, teachers, and related parties in developing digital literacy policies or programs that are oriented towards improving students' mental health.

BENEFITS OF RESEARCH
1. Theoretical Benefits
– Providing scientific contributions to the development of educational science, particularly in the field of digital literacy and adolescent mental health in the information technology era.
– To be an academic reference for further research examining the relationship between technology use, digital literacy, and students' psychological well-being.
– Generating new conceptual understandings regarding the role of schools in shaping healthy and responsible digital characters through formal educational approaches.
– Provides a theoretical basis for the development of a digital literacy-based education model that emphasizes the balance of students' cognitive, emotional, and social aspects.

2. Practical Benefits
a. For Schools
– Provides a concrete picture of effective strategies in strengthening digital literacy that is oriented towards students' mental health.
– To be the basis for developing school policies that support the wise, healthy, and productive use of technology.

– Encourage the formation of a positive digital culture where students, teachers, and parents work together to create a safe and educational learning environment.

b. For Teachers and Educational Staff
– Provides practical guidance in designing digital-based learning methods that are mentally friendly and build awareness of technological ethics.
– Helping teachers understand their role as digital literacy facilitators and character mentors in cyberspace.

c. For Students
– Cultivate awareness and reflective skills in using digital media in a healthy and responsible manner.
– Improving critical thinking skills, self-control, and digital empathy as part of positive mental health.

d. For Parents
– Provides insight into the importance of digital literacy and its impact on children's psychological development.
– Helping parents accompany their children in using technology wisely, openly, and communicatively.

e. For the Government and Educational Institutions
– This will be a consideration for national digital education policies that support students' mental health.
– Provides a model for implementing school-based digital literacy that can be adapted by other educational institutions in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS
This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because the   The research aims to deeply understand social phenomena in the school environment, particularly regarding the role of Al Azhar Medan's Leading High School in strengthening digital literacy and its relationship to students' mental health. Descriptive methods were used to describe actual conditions in the field based on observations, interviews, and documentation. This research focused on the meaning, patterns, and values in school actions and policies, rather than statistical analysis.

LOCATION AND TIME OF RESEARCH
The research was conducted at Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school, an educational institution known for its focus on character education and the use of technology in learning. The study was planned to last three months, encompassing preparation, data collection, analysis, and report preparation.

SUBJECT AND OBJECT OF RESEARCH
Subject:
– Principals, deputy heads of curriculum, and teachers involved in digital literacy activities.
– Students in grades XI and XII who actively participate in digital-based activities.
– School counselors or BK teachers who understand students' psychological conditions.
Object:
– The role of schools in designing and implementing digital literacy programs.
– The impact of digital literacy programs on adolescent mental health in schools.

DATA TYPES AND SOURCES
Primary Data:
Results of in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, students, and counselors, as well as direct observations of digital literacy activities.
Secondary Data:
School documents, activity reports, technology usage policies, and theoretical references from relevant books and scientific articles.

DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

1. **Interview**
   Semi-structured to explore the form of the program, implementation strategies, and its impact on students' behavior and mental condition.
2. **Observation**
   Direct observation of students' learning activities and digital interactions at school.
3. **Documentation**
   Analysis of school documents such as training reports, digital media usage guidelines, and evaluation results of activities related to digital literacy and mental health.

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

Analysis using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, includes:

1. **Data Reduction:** Selecting and grouping relevant data.
2. **Data Presentation:** Compile findings in the form of descriptive narratives, tables, or diagrams.
3. **Conclusion:** Interpret the findings to answer the research problem formulation.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school plays a crucial role in strengthening students' digital literacy as an effort to maintain adolescent mental health. Digital literacy at this school encompasses not only technical skills in using technology but also ethics, responsibility, and reflective awareness of the impacts of social media, as supported by Az-Zahra & Azhar (2025). Educational content such as infographics and videos on internet ethics and digital security have been shown to be effective in improving students' understanding. The integration of technology into learning, teacher training, and the formation of a student digital community are key strategies for the school to build a digital literacy culture oriented toward psychological well-being.

Furthermore, adaptive digital literacy has been shown to reduce the risk of risky behavior and strengthen adolescent mental resilience, in line with the findings of Afrioza et al., (2025) on online gambling prevention. Educational, collaborative, and preventive programs at Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school—such as digital well-being seminars, Islamic digital ethics training, and thematic counseling—encourage students to be critical and responsible in using digital media. Despite challenges such as differences in digital skills among students and limited learning time, teacher mentoring, collaboration with parents, and cooperation among students are effective solutions. Thus, strengthening digital literacy contributes to the formation of adolescents who are resilient, mentally healthy, and wise in using technology.

In addition to the programs already implemented, the role of teachers as digital literacy facilitators is a determining factor in the success of student mental health development. Teachers serve not only as presenters but also as mentors, helping students understand the risks and opportunities in the digital space. A project-based learning approach allows students to analytically explore digital issues, such as digital footprints, cyberbullying, and screen time management (Darmayasa et al., 2025). Through focused discussions and case studies, students are trained to recognize the signs of digital fatigue and develop preventative strategies. Strengthening teacher capacity through internal workshops and regular training makes the digital literacy education process increasingly relevant and adaptive to the dynamics of technological development.

On the other hand, a collaborative approach between schools and parents creates a consistent environment for shaping students' digital behavior (Shibgohtullah & Furrie, 2024). Parents are involved through a digital parenting program, which provides an understanding of how to support children in internet use, identify dangerous sites, and manage emotions related to social media interactions. This collaboration narrows the scope for miscommunication between students and families regarding digital activities, allowing for more appropriate emotional support. Schools also provide a dedicated communication channel for parents to monitor their children's digital behavior development, which helps strengthen supervision and foster a culture of healthy dialogue between students, teachers, and parents.

The school social environment also plays a significant role in strengthening adolescents' mental resilience through digital literacy. Digital communities such as multimedia clubs, literacy teams, and educational content groups provide a space for students to express their creativity and develop self-confidence. Content production activities, such

as educational vlogs, anti-hoax posters, and digital well-being campaigns, have been shown to improve communication and collaboration skills among students. Positive interactions within these communities help reduce the psychological stress often arising from academic competition or adolescent social dynamics. A culture of appreciation for students' digital work also emphasizes that technology use can be a healthy and constructive means of self-development.

However, this study also found that digital literacy challenges are not static; changing social media algorithms, the rise of harmful content, and increasing dependence on technology demand innovative learning strategies. Therefore, Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school continues to update its digital literacy curriculum to incorporate current issues such as data security, information manipulation, and digital-based mental health. Simulation-based learning and the use of interactive educational platforms help students understand the real-world consequences of their digital activities. Furthermore, collaboration with external parties such as psychologists, cybersecurity agencies, and literacy organizations further enriches students' understanding of complex digital dynamics.

With all the strategies implemented, strengthening digital literacy in this school focuses not only on technical skills but also on developing a healthy and responsible digital character. Adolescents with good digital literacy tend to be better able to manage their emotions when facing online pressure, refrain from impulsive behavior, and engage in self-reflection before acting (Lestari et al., 2023). Digital literacy also serves as psychological protection, helping students face contemporary challenges such as cyberbullying, game addiction, or exposure to negative content. Therefore, the systematic efforts undertaken by Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school demonstrate that digital literacy can be a strategic foundation for creating a resilient, morally upright generation ready to face the dynamics of the digital era with a healthy mentality and strong character.

CONCLUSION
1. Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school plays a central role in strengthening students' digital literacy through the integration of technology into learning, teacher training, and digital-based activities. The school emphasizes technological skills as well as ethical awareness and responsible use.
2. Digital literacy programs contribute positively to students' mental health. Wise use of digital media reduces stress and anxiety and improves self-control.
3. The school's strategy is holistic and collaborative, involving teachers, counselors, and school officials to maintain a balance between digital activities and real social life.
4. Challenges remain, such as the digital skills gap and the negative influence of social media, but digital character building is an effective solution.
5. Digital literacy at Al Azhar Medan's flagship high school is not only a learning tool, but also a means of character building that fosters empathy, ethics, and self-awareness in students.

SUGGESTION
1. **For Schools:**
   – Developing a digital literacy curriculum that is adaptive to technological developments and adolescent psychology.
   – Conducting regular training for teachers to become digital literacy facilitators who are oriented towards students' emotional balance.
2. **For Teachers and Educators:**
   – Integrating digital ethics into every subject.
   – Taking a personal approach to students who experience stress due to social media.
3. **For Students:**
   – Using digital media productively and responsibly.
   – Actively participate in digital literacy activities that foster creativity and social empathy.
4. **For Parents:**
   – Strengthening supervision and communication with children in digital activities.
   – Providing emotional support to maintain balance between the virtual world and real life.
5. **For Further Researchers:**
   – Expanding the focus to other schools for comparison between educational models.

– Using a quantitative approach to measure the effectiveness of digital literacy on mental health indicators more specifically.

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