Constructing Alternative Digital Media in Educating Gender Literacy to High School Students

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Abstract. Over the last one year, Indonesia is struggling to find solutions to COVID-19 pandemic which is raising many social problems. Violence against women cases have significantly raised during the pandemic which reached to 299.911 cases in 2020 according to National Commission Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), some of the victims are adolescent. In order to understand this issue, the research focused on gender literacy from the high school student's point of view. Based on the digital society framework, the aim of present study was to identify the existing digital media to educate gender literacy to adolescent and to construct the alternative media to educate gender literacy mainly for the adolescent. The research used case study method which undertook a series of in-depth interviews and participatory group approach of high school students. 40 high school students were selected from public school, private school, and vocational school in West Java and East Java provinces. The result shows the present digital media focuses on gender literacy is still limited in terms of content and targeted audience; the need of collaboration of educating gender literacy without any prejudice within school setting; and the urgency to develop an effective alternative digital media that using simple words, non-gender bias content, attractive visual design, and more interactivity.

Keywords: digital media · gender literacy · media · literacy · adolescent

1 Introduction

In the last 2 years, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted various social problems. One of them is violence against women. Violence against women has increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on data from the National Commission on Violence Against Women/Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan [1].

Graph 1 describes in general the number cases of violence against women over the last 13 years. In 2020 the amount of violence against women decreases around 31.5% compared to the previous year. But it does not mean the number of violence has actually decreased.

Graph 1. Overview of Violence Against Women from 2008 – 2021 [1].

This decline was due to:

1. The victim is close to the perpetrator during the pandemic (government policy)
2. Victims tend to complain to their families or choose to be silence
3. Technological literacy barriers
4. The complaint service model is still not ready for the pandemic condition, which has not been adapted into online complaints.

For example, the religious courts limited the services and the trial process, so that the divorce rate fell from the previous year [1]. This is in line with research conducted by Miksilmina that in the field there are still many cases of violence that are not reported, it is necessary to have an online reporting system that is friendly and easy to use [2]. From the amount of violence against women, the age of children and adolescents is an age that is vulnerable and has a high risk of becoming victims of violence. The results of research conducted by Mannika shows that 4 out of 5 teenage girls in Surabaya have the potential to become victims of violence in romantic relationships with their boyfriend [3].

To prevent violence against women, the government has made various efforts. For example, launching violence prevention programs in. Such as in Depok City, Pusat Pelayanan Terpadu Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Anak (P2TP2A) in collaboration with the Dinas Pendidikan by conducting socialization of "Stop Kekerasan Anak" and establishing a children's forum, 2) involving P2TP2A in the recruitment of teachers and school principals [4]. Another prevention effort is to provide educational media in preventing violence against children. From the research observation, media selection for preventing violence is still limited to sexual education, the differences in the physical form of men and women but not on gender literacy, the roles of men and women in social construction. In order to answer this challenge, our research team tries to provide alternative solutions in designing gender literacy education media for adolescents.

The results of a recent study shows that currently the use of digital media by children and adolescents has begun to be easier to access. Research conducted by Nureni et al. [5] regarding internet use in Bandung district shows that 92% of adolescents access digital media via mobile phones [5]. Similar to the previous study from what happened in Bandung Regency, another research conducted by Karma in Jayapura City, Papua Province showed that the majority of junior high school teenagers were already using mobile phones. The content that they access is related to entertainment content, learning materials and social media.

2   Research Objective

In order to understand the digital media uses for teenagers and its relevancy with gender issues thus the objectives of the research are to identify whether gender literacy is part of teenagers' access to digital media content; to explore existing digital media that consist gender literacy education; and to construct the alternative media which suitable for teenagers to get information about gender literacy education.

3   Literature Review

Gender Literacy
Educating basic gender concepts and gender equality can be quite challenging because there are some misconceptions about gender. Gender often understood as something that has been given naturally to an individual and cannot be separated from her/his sex. Whereas, gender and sex are two different things which still intertwined. Gender is socially constructed and sex is biological, it is related with our reproduction organ [6]. Meaning, gender actually can be negotiated because it was made based on social convention, although we might not realize that.

The misconceptions of gender and sex may lead to gender stereotypes which can discriminate both men and women. Therefore, gender literacy is necessary for promoting equality in a patriarchal society. As a concept, gender literacy can be defined as an awareness or understanding of gender-related issues which affect women [7]. Although gender literacy seems to be stressed on women, it does not mean that men are not affected by certain gender-related issues. In general, gender literacy focuses on the development of skills to think critically about gender narratives which are socially constructed [8]. By getting a more comprehensive understanding about gender narratives, people are expected to be more aware of gender inequality and the root of the problem.

Digital Media as Gender Literacy Education Platform
As the source of information, the media plays an important role in constructing the meaning of gender. This is because the media has the ability to portray the 'image' of men and women and tell their audiences how to act or behave like the ideal men and women. While some studies show that media may reinforce the gender-based stereotypes [9], which may lead to discrimination against men and women, the other studies focused on how digital media can be used to promote gender equality [10, 11]. In other words, it is possible to educate gender literacy to people by utilizing the right media.

The utilization of alternative media as an education platform actually has been recognized for a long time. For example, entertainment media like video games are often used as an alternative tool for teaching and learning. Video games can be very helpful in improving education due to its ability to provide real-life simulation [12]. The other study found out that digital comic strips also can be utilized as educational tools [13].

In regards to gender literacy, the transformation of media technology has provided the opportunity to develop the alternative media as an important part of gender literacy education. For instance, many activists and organizations harnessed social media to promote gender equality and resistance towards gender-based violence. The result of study that conducted by Kaufman, Dey, and Dredze shows that the utilization of hashtag

in #MeToo movement (as a campaign to combat sexual violence against women) has caused greater information seeking [14]. Thus, it might help gender activists to preserve #MeToo's sustainability as a digital activism which started from Twitter. Beside Twitter, the audio-visual social media platform like YouTube also helps people to learn about basic gender concepts and gender equality through the videos that are posted by some channels, for instance, the one that was created by UNESCO.

4   Methodology

In order to identify the most suitable alternative media to educate gender literacy to high school students, this research used a qualitative method and case study approach. This approach allows us to get an profound understanding of alternative media and gender literacy [15]. The data were obtained through an in-depth interview, which involved 40 students from public, private, and vocational schools in West Java and East Java provinces, Indonesia, as the key informant. In those interviews, we asked about students' perception towards the concept of sex, gender, sexual violence, and their media preferences. Beside the interview, we also conducted an observation on social media, websites, and applications to map the existing alternative media that promote gender literacy or gender equality. This observation includes the name of the application, platform, and description.

The field research was conducted one year during the Covid-19 pandemic on October 2020 – October 2021. Despite there were some constraints doing the field research due to the social movement limitation but through good arrangement and coordination with school's management all the interviews can be done perfectly and safely.

5   Results

In the digital era, people are connected to smartphones, laptops, and more devices almost every minute to access information, sharing life stories, publishing digital content and many more. In this research we explore all kinds of digital applications that exist and can be accessed through the smartphone which propose gender literacy content (Table 1).

The table above may not list all the digital applications but we try to identify the digital applications that really consist of gender literacy issues. Each of the digital applications mentioned above has a specific objective for digital users to start learning something about gender literacy, but in terms of the audience target is vary to mass audience. There is still limited digital application that targets the adolescent thus it becomes a challenge to disseminate information and educate gender literacy in the very beginning phase of individual life.

Educating gender literacy to society is slightly difficult especially if we want to educate the adolescents that have self-interpretation about man and woman role in everyday life. In series of interviews to high school students, we asked what their knowledge and understanding about gender, gender roles, and how their teacher at school teach them about gender issue. Interestingly, most of the students can give simple explanation the difference about sex and gender definition although at some point female students were
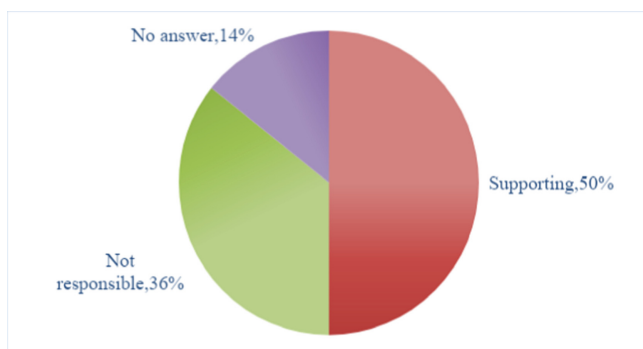
Table 1. The List of Digital Application with Gender Literacy Content

The name of application	Platform	Description
Ur-Space Created by Bandung city government in cooperation with Asian Development Bank	Android (Google Play Store)	Ur-Space is an application based on social and spatial data planning that is related to gender mainstreaming in four dimensions namely mobility, accessibility, participation, security and life safety. Those dimensions must be supported by the social context and real challenges faced by women who live in urban areas.
Sheboard Created by Holopainen	Android (Google Play Store)	Sheboard was created by Plan International with the objective to change the narration about gender. The android users can download it freely to their devices and they can use it to learn many words related to women and girl's empowerment. For example, if someone sends a text message that starts with "Girls are…." then the application will suggest the rest of the sentences which include words like "dare" or "success".
Girl Rising Created by Vodafone Foundation India	Android (Google Play Store)	This application is based on the real-life stories of girls from groundbreaking film The Girl Rising. Users will assist the character to complete assignments and various tasks. It also uses quizzes to educate people in identifying gender-based discrimination, norms discussion, and learn more about women's achievement.

Table 1. (*continued*)

The name of application	Platform	Description
TeamEQ Created by TeamEQ	Android (Google Play Store)	Team EQ aims to increase the level of emotional intelligence and increase the gender equality in every team. It provides an anonymous survey to employees on users' teams every two weeks to measure metrics such as motivation, well-being, satisfaction, and engagement. The result can be as a basic analysis to compare opinions between team members and then take action on areas that need improvement.

Fig. 1. Students' Perception toward Men's Involvement in Household Chores

reluctantly accepting the idea of men can do things as women do. As one of the key informants, SL, said,

"If the husband does the cleaning or any house work as the assistance to his wife sometime then it's ok... But if he's doing it every day because he's unemployed then it's hard to take. Man should be the breadwinner in the family right."

This opinion can also be based on the limitations of gender literacy in the high school curricula which is only learned from the religion course. From the interviews with several teachers, all of them were admitting the difficulties of giving a clear information about man and woman roles in everyday life without distancing from religion perspective (Fig. 1).

Regarding the involvement of men in household chores, the results showed that most of the informants in Pangalengan, Pangandaran and Subang thought that men could do household chores, but were limited to supporting (not fully responsible). Meanwhile, none of the informants argued that men were solely responsible for household chores. Thus, it can be interpreted that the perception of gender roles has not fully transformed.

6   Discussion

In the present study, the high school students understanding about gender issues are in the basic level and have to confront with some disagreement of the concept gender equality on every aspect. Limitations of discussing and educating the adolescent in the school about gender are facing problems regarding giving examples without putting religion norms and no gender-bias at all.

In a recent study, Das et al. examined the relationship among adolescent male's gender attitudes, and it concluded that promoting equitable gender attitudes may be an important modifiable factor in preventing violence against women and girls [16].

At some point there are some positive changes in digital media toward gender equality. There is a way to educate gender literacy through games, quizzes, teamwork, and many more. It is a promising step although we have to put more attention on adolescents as the main target. There's a challenge to create a digital application that uses familiar terms with the adolescent, more attractive visual design, and moreover about the interaction between the users.

7   Conclusion

The result shows the present digital media focuses on gender literacy is still limited in terms of content and targeted audience; the need of collaboration of educating gender literacy without any prejudice within school setting; and the urgency to develop an effective alternative digital media that using simple words, non-gender bias content, attractive visual design, and more interactivity.

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