

Social Media and Young People's Legal Moral Awareness: Education, Polarization, and Digital Judgment

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how social media shapes legal and moral awareness among young people through education and polarization dynamics. A qualitative literature review approach was employed to synthesize findings from various scholarly sources addressing digital platforms, legal consciousness, moral development, and online shaming phenomena. The analysis reveals that social media provides broad access to legal information, creating opportunities for democratic legal education among young people. Algorithmic filtering and echo chamber effects intensify polarization, narrowing perspectives on legal and moral issues. Online shaming has emerged as a parallel justice system where public opinion replaces formal legal procedures, threatening fundamental principles such as presumption of innocence and due process. Quality of legal and moral awareness formed through social media depends heavily on digital literacy skills and support from family and community environments. Comprehensive digital literacy education and active family involvement are essential to maximize positive potential of social media while minimizing its risks. Legal frameworks need adaptation to protect individual rights and ensure justice in digital spaces. Educational reform integrating digital literacy and moral education across curricula becomes imperative for preparing young people to navigate complex information environments responsibly.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has fundamentally transformed the landscape of global communication over the past two decades. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok connect billions of users in networks that allow information to spread at a speed never seen before. This intense flow of information carries major consequences for how society gains knowledge about law and morality. The younger generation, who grew up as digital natives, relies on social media as a primary source of information on issues such as justice, human rights, and social responsibility (Okwir, 2025). Studies on the meeting point between religious norms and legal structures show that the legal and moral values circulating in society often stem from diverse value systems (Mujito et al., 2022). This wide access carries the potential to democratize legal knowledge that was previously reachable only through limited formal channels. Technology can inherently play a dual role, advancing social progress while also creating new obstacles depending on how it is used (Darmawan, 2024). However, the open and unfiltered nature of social media also raises new challenges in telling

valid information apart from baseless opinion. The quality of legal and moral knowledge gained through social media depends heavily on the credibility of the source and users' ability to verify it.

The growth of social media has brought significant change to how young people form their legal and moral awareness. Unlike earlier generations, who relied on formal educational institutions and family as the primary sources of values, today's generation is exposed to a wide range of influences from around the world through their screens (Sokolova et al., 2022). Content about legal and moral issues can easily spread and go viral within hours, shaping public opinion on a massive scale. This phenomenon opens opportunities for broader and more democratic legal education, in which individuals can learn about their rights and obligations as citizens. Yet this flood of information also makes it harder for young people to separate educational content from misleading content. Responsible technology development stresses the importance of designing platforms fairly rather than chasing profit alone (Radjawane & Mardikaningsih, 2022). Social media algorithms built to maximize user

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engagement often favor provocative and emotional content over informative and substantive content. Research on digital campaign effectiveness confirms that emotional engagement and narrative structure indeed capture user attention more easily than the plain presentation of facts (Rahman, 2024). This condition demands a higher level of digital literacy from social media users.

The information ecosystem on social media is marked by growing polarization driven by the filtering mechanisms algorithms run. Users tend to be exposed to content that matches their existing beliefs and preferences, creating an echo chamber that reinforces existing views without challenge from alternative perspectives (Springsteen et al., 2024). Principles of sustainable system management show that balance among elements largely determines long-term stability (Mardikaningsih & Nuraini, 2022). This polarization is strongly felt in issues concerning law and morality, where differences of opinion are often sharpened into black-and-white conflict. Young people who grow up in this polarized digital environment struggle to develop a balanced understanding of controversial issues. The ability to see nuance and complexity in legal and moral matters erodes as people tend to side with one of the opposing poles. Excessive polarization threatens social cohesion and the ability of society to reach consensus on the basic values important to shared life. As a result, public dialogue on important issues becomes increasingly difficult and often turns into unproductive debate.

The phenomenon of digital judgment, or online shaming, has become a real manifestation of how social media changes the practice of justice in contemporary society. Individuals deemed to have committed a moral or legal violation are often judged en masse by the digital public without going through a fair legal process. This judgment process moves fast, without adequate fact confirmation, and is often accompanied by personal attacks that damage a person's reputation and life (Garno, 2025). A study on ethical leadership stresses that social responsibility should be carried out through an accountable and structured process, not one-sided judgment (Rojak & Darmawan, 2021). Young people active on social media become main actors in this phenomenon, acting as judge and jury in a public trial that unfolds in digital space. This practice reflects a shift in moral authority from formal institutions toward the public opinion formed on digital platforms. The effectiveness of a formal system is also shaped by a range of structured supporting factors, not merely opinions that arise spontaneously (Darmawan, 2024). Digital judgment

often disregards the presumption of innocence and fair legal process, which are fundamental pillars of a modern justice system. As a result, targeted individuals can suffer severe psychological and social consequences even when their guilt has not been formally proven.

The gap between broad access to information and the capacity to process that information critically has become a central challenge in the social media era. Young people have greater access to legal and moral information than previous generations, yet their capacity to evaluate the credibility and implications of that information often fails to develop at the same pace (Shtulman, 2023). A study on self-efficacy shows that an individual's ability to adapt to technological change strongly affects how well they make use of new information (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022). This condition creates a situation where shallow knowledge and strong opinions grow without being grounded in adequate understanding. Complex issues about justice and morality get reduced to simple narratives that are easy to digest yet inaccurate. Social media, with its fast and brief nature, pushes excessive simplification of issues that actually require careful and thorough consideration. Strategies to build knowledge are also needed so that users can process the flow of information in a more mature way (Darmawan, 2024). As a result, young people may develop a fragmented legal and moral awareness that is poorly integrated. This challenge calls for serious attention from various stakeholders to ensure that social media becomes a beneficial educational tool.

The main problem is the inability of young people to sort valid legal and moral information from misleading content on social media. The characteristics of digital platforms, which prioritize speed and emotional engagement, often come at the expense of accuracy and depth of information. Young people accustomed to fast and instant information consumption may lose the ability to verify facts and critically evaluate the content they consume. This is especially dangerous in legal and moral matters, since misinterpretation can carry serious consequences for oneself and others. Wrong information about legal rights, judicial procedures, or moral standards can shape deviant or harmful behavior. The tendency to spread information without verification worsens this problem, since errors can quickly go viral and become hard to correct. Current digital literacy education is often not enough to equip young people with the skills needed to face the complexity of information on social media. The root of this problem lies in the imbalance between technological advancement and the

readiness of human resources to deal with it.

Young people who grow up with access to social media may come to see the collective opinion formed on digital platforms as holding legitimacy equal to a formal court ruling. This practice is dangerous because it disregards basic principles of justice such as the presumption of innocence, the right to be heard, and a transparent process. The often-anonymous identity of perpetrators makes digital judgment unaccountable and prone to misuse. Victims of digital judgment often have no chance to defend themselves or correct the false information circulating about them. Psychological pressure from unfair treatment can significantly lower a person's wellbeing, as found in a study on work-related stress (Mardikaningsih & Sinambela, 2022). The psychological and social impact of digital judgment can ruin a person's life even if the accusation is later proven false. This phenomenon shows that social media has created a parallel justice system that lacks adequate mechanisms to protect individual rights.

Changes occurring in the way the younger generation accesses and processes legal and moral information have long-term implications for the quality of democracy and social order. Societies that are unable to manage information polarization and rampant digital vigilante practices will face the risk of deepening social fragmentation (Leybold et al., 2025). The younger generation, as heirs to the future, requires proper guidance to develop mature legal and moral awareness amidst a challenging digital environment. Social stability and legal certainty require citizens who are not only exposed to information but are also capable of processing it critically and responsibly. The purpose of this writing is to systematically examine the influence of social media on the legal and moral awareness of the younger generation, with attention to the educational and polarization aspects that accompany it. This writing aims to analyze how digital platforms expand access to legal and moral information, as well as how mechanisms of polarization and digital judgment affect the practices of justice in society.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative literature study approach as the main methodological framework to understand the dynamics of social media in shaping the legal and moral awareness of the younger generation. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore various theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from multiple sources without conducting primary data collection. Makateng and Mokala (2025) explain that qualitative

research provides a rich understanding of social phenomena through the interpretation of meanings constructed by individuals within their social environment. The literature study approach in this research enables the identification, evaluation, and synthesis of knowledge from various scientific publications relevant to the researched topic (Orozco, 2025). The data sources of this research consist of journal articles, academic books, and conference proceedings discussing social media, legal awareness, adolescent moral development, and the phenomenon of digital vigilante justice. Source selection is carried out through systematic searches on academic databases using predetermined keywords. Inclusion criteria encompass publications that explicitly discuss the relationship between social media and the legal and moral awareness of the younger generation. This approach allows researchers to build a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being examined.

The analysis procedure in this research follows a systematic workflow consisting of the collection, organization, and interpretation of literature relevant to the research topic. Brailas (2025) emphasizes that the qualitative approach in research requires careful attention to the data collection and interpretation process to produce credible findings. The initial stage of the research includes the formulation of sharp research questions and the identification of primary keywords such as social media, legal awareness, youth morality, digital polarization, and online judgment. Literature searches are conducted on leading databases with relevant publication year limitations to ensure the currency of the analyzed information. The screening process is conducted based on the relevance of titles and abstracts to the research questions, followed by full-text reading to evaluate the contribution of each source (Abid, 2022). This research performs thematic analysis on the content of the selected literature to identify patterns of relationships between the studied variables. Cross-source triangulation is conducted to ensure the validity of findings and avoid bias in interpretation. This systematic approach enables the research to produce a complete synthesis of knowledge regarding the impact of social media on the legal and moral awareness of the younger generation as well as the phenomenon of digital judgment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social media has become the main arena for young people to access and discuss legal and moral issues in daily life. Digital platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok give users a space to share

information about legal cases, public policy, and moral dilemmas that arise in society. Young people who use social media intensively become the primary consumers of such content, shaping their understanding of justice, human rights, and social responsibility. This process of forming legal and moral awareness happens informally and organically, unlike formal education, which is structured and systematic (Corsei, 2025). An individual's disposition also plays a role here: a strong internal locus of control tends to produce more consistent ethical behavior when facing information choices online (Halizah & Mardikaningsih, 2022). The interactive nature of social media lets users take part in discussion, ask questions, and share experiences, creating a dynamic learning space. A dynamic and positive space like this usually forms around credible figures, much like authentic leadership shapes a positive climate and encourages constructive citizenship behavior within a group (Mardikaningsih et al., 2022). However, the quality of information circulating varies widely, ranging from highly educational content to misleading and provocative content. Young people's ability to tell valid information apart from mistaken information becomes the deciding factor in the quality of legal and moral awareness that forms.

Broad access to legal information through social media carries significant educational potential for young people who previously may not have had access to such knowledge. Legal cases that draw public attention are often explained in detail by experts through Twitter threads or analysis videos on YouTube. Young people can learn about judicial procedures, defendants' rights, and principles of justice through content presented in easy-to-understand language. This educational content can raise public legal awareness and encourage more active public participation in overseeing the judicial process (Garno, 2025). Effective knowledge sharing does not happen on its own; it depends on how well the information is organized and managed so that it reaches the audience accurately (Eddine et al., 2023). Several legal education initiatives that make use of social media have successfully reached wider audiences than conventional education methods. The value of shared information also depends on the competence of the people producing it, much as the quality of human resources determines the quality of the work they produce (Darmawan et al., 2020). However, this easy access also means that false or misleading information about law can spread at the same speed. As a result, young people may develop a mistaken understanding of law and their rights if

they are not equipped with adequate critical literacy skills. Legal education through social media needs stricter oversight and verification so that it does not mislead the public.

Information polarization on social media is one of the biggest challenges in forming balanced legal and moral awareness among young people (Voinich, 2024). Social media platform algorithms are designed to display content that matches users' preferences and beliefs, creating a filter bubble that isolates individuals from alternative perspectives. Inside this bubble, users are constantly exposed to information that reinforces their views, while conflicting information rarely appears. Reaching a shared understanding of values actually requires an adaptable mindset, much like flexible organizational structures allow a company to adjust to a changing environment (Darmawan & Mardikaningsih, 2023). Young people who grow up in an environment like this develop an increasingly narrow worldview and become less tolerant of differences. Legal and moral issues that should be discussed by weighing various points of view instead get reduced to a debate between two opposing camps. A shared culture built on sound values calls for ethical direction, since sustainable organizational culture, too, is shaped through ethical leadership rather than left to develop on its own (Mardikaningsih et al., 2022). The ability to see complexity and nuance in legal and moral matters is eroded by this tendency toward polarization. As a result, public dialogue on important issues becomes increasingly difficult and often turns into unproductive confrontation. Excessive polarization threatens social cohesion and society's ability to reach consensus on basic values.

The phenomenon of digital judgment has become a real manifestation of how social media changes the practice of justice in contemporary society. Young people active on digital platforms often become the main actors in this phenomenon, quickly forming opinions and passing verdicts on individuals or groups deemed to have committed a moral or legal violation (Syarofi, 2025). This process happens without a fair legal procedure, without adequate fact confirmation, and without giving the accused a chance to defend themselves. The identity of those carrying out digital judgment is often anonymous, making the process unaccountable and prone to misuse. Victims of digital judgment can face damage similar to what happens when protective structures break down: growing insecurity and social isolation, as seen in workers left without adequate safety nets (Gardi & Darmawan, 2024). Victims of digital judgment can suffer devastating

consequences, including job loss, damaged reputation, and mental health problems. This practice reflects an erosion of trust in formal legal institutions and society's tendency to take justice into its own hands. Such conditions worsen without a supportive psychological environment, since positive psychological factors are known to help a person stay engaged and committed even under pressure (Darmawan & Mardikaningsih, 2022). This phenomenon shows that social media has created a parallel justice system operating without adequate mechanisms to protect individual rights. As a result, the presumption of innocence, a foundation of the modern justice system, is at risk of being eroded.

Young people exposed to the phenomenon of digital judgment come to understand that justice can be enforced through the power of public opinion on digital platforms. The experience of witnessing or taking part in digital judgment shapes their perception of how justice should operate in society. When they see that an individual can be effectively punished through public pressure without going through a formal court process, their trust in formal legal institutions may weaken (Ștefănoaia, 2025). Trust like this is usually built gradually through a clear and accountable mechanism, the same way organizational loyalty and belonging are cultivated through consistent leadership rather than instant validation (Gani, 2024). This perception is dangerous because it disregards the complexity and caution needed in a fair judicial process. Cases that go viral on social media often present only one perspective, ignoring wider context and evidence that might clear the accused. The digital environment itself shapes how people judge a process as fair or not, in much the same way workplace digital tools shape employees' perception of a healthy work-life balance (Eddine & Darmawan, 2025). Young people accustomed to instant justice on social media may lose patience with the formal legal process, which takes time and requires complicated procedures. This can reduce their respect for the rule of law and law enforcement institutions. Education on the importance of a fair legal process becomes increasingly crucial to counter the negative influence of the digital judgment phenomenon.

Digital literacy skills are becoming increasingly important for young people to face the complexity of legal and moral information on social media. Digital literacy includes the ability to evaluate the credibility of a source, verify facts, and recognize bias in the content consumed. Young people with strong digital literacy will be better able to distinguish valid information from misleading information on legal and moral issues (Sarkawi et al., 2025). Such literacy

functions much like knowledge itself in an organization, a resource that becomes a real advantage only when it is properly managed and applied (Darmawan, 2023). They will also be more resistant to polarization since they are able to weigh various perspectives before forming an opinion. The ability to recognize manipulation tactics such as clickbait and provocative content is also an important part of digital literacy. Building this ability calls for creativity in processing information, since even in the workplace, productivity in the digital era is closely tied to how well a person can think creatively and adapt (Darmawan, 2023). Effective digital literacy education teaches not only technical skills but also develops a critical and reflective attitude toward information. Unfortunately, digital literacy education in many countries remains limited and poorly integrated into the formal curriculum. As a result, young people often have to learn through trial and error, which can carry negative consequences for the development of their legal and moral awareness.

Social media has also become a means for young people to express their concern for social justice and human rights issues. Advocacy campaigns started on social media have succeeded in driving policy change and raising awareness of various important issues. Young people use digital platforms to organize social movements, gather support, and pressure policymakers to take action. Active participation in this digital advocacy strengthens their legal and moral awareness because they are directly involved in the struggle for justice (Nopindra, 2025). Yet advocacy on legal matters carries a heavy responsibility, since sustaining justice, even in a formal adversarial system, ultimately depends on professional integrity, not spontaneous public pressure (Saktiawan et al., 2021). This experience develops a deeper understanding of how law and policy affect people's lives. However, digital advocacy also carries the risk of oversimplifying complex issues and forming opinions too hastily. Viral campaigns are often based on information that has not been fully verified, which can lead to mistaken conclusions. Young people need to be equipped with the ability to engage in advocacy responsibly and based on accurate facts.

Social interaction on social media shapes the moral development of young people through mechanisms of social reinforcement and observational learning. When young people see that ethical behavior receives positive recognition on digital platforms, they tend to adopt that behavior. This dynamic touches how a person relates to others day to day, since social relationships and psychological wellbeing are known to be closely linked

to the broader social environment a person is embedded in (Darmawan, 2023). Behavior that draws public condemnation will be avoided out of fear of becoming a target of digital judgment. This mechanism can function as effective informal social control in encouraging compliance with moral norms. However, social control through social media is also prone to misuse, since it can turn into unfair mob rule (Salarian & Salarian, 2025). A more constructive alternative would rely on shared ethical values as an instrument for resolving conflict, rather than pressure from momentary public opinion (Khayru, Hardyansah, & Rojak, 2021). The criteria for behavior considered ethical or unethical are often determined by momentary majority opinion that can shift quickly. Young people may develop a conformist moral orientation, adjusting their behavior to what is popular on social media rather than to carefully considered moral principles. This can hinder the development of autonomous moral reasoning, which is the actual goal of genuine moral education. Balancing social influence and the development of moral autonomy becomes a challenge in the social media era.

The speed at which information spreads on social media creates pressure for young people to respond to legal and moral issues immediately. Unlike the time-consuming reflection process in traditional moral education, social media demands quick responses to various emerging issues. Young people often feel pushed to take a stance on an issue right away without enough time to consider all relevant aspects (Yue, 2025). This constant pressure to respond instantly can take a toll on mental wellbeing, since a person's psychological state is shaped in large part by the demands placed on them by their environment (Issalillah & Khayru, 2025). The pressure to respond immediately can lead to rushed and immature moral decision-making. Opinions formed quickly on social media are often shallow and fail to consider the real complexity of the issue. Young people may feel they must pick one of two opposing sides, with no room for doubt or more careful consideration. The ability to hold back from an instant response and take time to reflect becomes an important skill that needs to be developed. Moral education in the digital era needs to emphasize the importance of careful thinking before taking a stance on legal and moral issues.

Social media has changed the relationship between individuals and legal institutions by creating a new public space where oversight of law enforcement becomes more transparent. Young people can easily record and share incidents of legal violations they witness, creating greater public

accountability for law enforcement officers. The ability to document and share evidence of legal violations has empowered the public to oversee the course of justice. Several cases of abuse of power uncovered through social media have led to significant legal action and policy reform. This public oversight through social media has the potential to improve the justice system and increase public trust in the law (Garno, 2025). Such oversight only holds value when carried out with sound ethical judgment, since decisions grounded in ethical principles are what protect trust between an institution and the parties who depend on it (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022). However, oversight that is careless and lacks adequate verification can also lead to slander and baseless accusations against individuals or institutions. Young people need to understand that public oversight carries major ethical responsibility and must be carried out with care. The use of social media for legal oversight must be balanced with a sense of responsibility toward truth and justice.

Differences in access to technology and digital literacy create a gap in the quality of legal and moral awareness formed through social media. Young people from different economic backgrounds have unequal access to digital devices and adequate internet connections. This gap resembles the challenge organizations face when adopting new digital tools, where certain groups risk being left behind if inclusion is not deliberately built into the process (Darmawan, 2023). This access gap results in differences in the quality and quantity of information that can be accessed, which in turn affects their legal and moral awareness. Young people with better access and higher digital literacy tend to develop more mature and balanced legal and moral awareness (Shrejith, 2025). Those with limited access and low literacy are more vulnerable to the influence of misleading information. This gap reinforces existing social inequality and creates new challenges in efforts to build a legally aware society. Public policy needs to pay attention to this gap and work to provide more equal access to technology and digital literacy education. Without proper intervention, the gap in legal and moral awareness will keep widening in the future.

Formal education on law and morality needs to adapt to the reality of social media to remain relevant for young people. The education curriculum must include material on how to use social media responsibly to access and discuss legal and moral issues. Teaching methods need to make use of digital technology and social media platforms to reach young people in an environment familiar to them (Al-Hariri et al., 2025). This kind of adaptation

requires flexibility, since reshaping how work and learning are organized in the digital era depends on the willingness to adjust established structures (Mardikaningsih, 2025). Interactive and participatory learning approaches, such as simulations and case discussions on digital platforms, can increase student engagement and understanding. Teachers and educators need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to guide students in navigating legal and moral information on social media. Collaboration between educational institutions, social media platforms, and civil society organizations can create a more effective education ecosystem. Developing a curriculum responsive to technological and social change is a necessity in facing the challenges of the digital era. Without this adaptation, formal legal and moral education risks losing its relevance and effectiveness in shaping young people's awareness.

The phenomenon of social media and digital judgment calls for new mechanisms to protect individual rights and ensure justice in the digital era. Current law is often not yet sufficient to regulate activity on social media and protect victims from unfair digital judgment. Building such protection requires a legal foundation as firm as the one already recognized in areas like patient rights, where law and ethics work together to safeguard the individual (Herisasono et al., 2023). The need for clear regulation on the responsibility of social media platforms toward the content circulating on them is becoming more urgent. Protecting individual privacy and reputation in digital space requires a more comprehensive and effective legal framework (Toruan & Sidauruk, 2024). This kind of accountability mirrors how businesses are expected to uphold their ethical, moral, and legal obligations toward the parties affected by their actions (Darmawan, 2022). The mechanism for holding perpetrators of digital judgment accountable for defamation also needs to be strengthened. Compliance with such obligations tends to hold only when moral values are actively reinforced within decision-making practices, not left as a mere formality (Halizah, Mardikaningsih, & da Cruz, 2024). Young people need to understand that freedom of expression on social media comes with limits and ethical responsibilities. Platforms carry a responsibility comparable to that of any large operation toward the people it affects, in the same way sustainable practices ask companies to weigh their social impact, not just efficiency (Barzani, Darmawan, & Zulkarnain, 2022). The development of digital ethics and a code of conduct for social media use can serve as a guide for responsible

behavior. Managing the flood of content circulating on these platforms also demands a more deliberate approach to how information is processed and acted upon, much as sound data management determines the quality of a decision (Ali & Darmawan, 2023). New approaches to strengthening such regulation may also need fresh thinking, since building competitiveness in other fields, too, has depended on the courage to innovate in the way things are done (Abdullah, Gardi, & Darmawan, 2021). A collective effort from various stakeholders is needed to create a digital space that is safe and fair for all users.

The role of family and community in guiding young people through the influence of social media remains highly important even as technology keeps advancing. Parents and older family members can offer value-based guidance and a more mature perspective on legal and moral issues (Kesavan et al., 2025). This kind of guidance works best when delivered through a consistent approach, in the same way leadership and a strong culture shape the loyalty and character of those it guides (Hariani & Irfan, 2022). Discussion within the family about content consumed on social media can help young people develop critical thinking. Local communities can also serve as a space for reflection and dialogue on issues developing on social media, offering a broader social frame of reference. Individual differences also play a role in how young people respond to these influences, since personal traits are known to shape how a person performs and reacts in various situations (Darmawan, 2017). Parental involvement in their children's digital activities, without violating their privacy, can help detect problems early. A stable and supportive home environment matters here too, given that a healthy balance between work and personal life, along with a sense of being supported, is closely tied to a person's psychological wellbeing (Darmawan, 2022). Education on responsible social media use should begin within the family before children enter the wider digital world. Guiding young people through this fast-changing digital landscape calls for an approach that balances technological pace with deeper, human-centered thinking, rather than technology alone (Darmawan, 2023). Support from a cohesive community can serve as a safeguard against the negative influence of polarization and digital judgment. Developing sound judgment in young people, in fact, resembles building any other capability, since it grows through accumulated experience and consistent practice rather than instant exposure (Arifin & Putra, 2020). Synergy between family, community, and educational institutions is key to shaping healthy legal and moral awareness

among young people.

Legal and moral awareness formed through social media has long-term implications for the quality of democracy and governance. The younger generation with good legal awareness will become active and critical citizens, capable of monitoring government performance and demanding accountability (Pande & Asthana, 2024). Their participation in the democratic process will be more meaningful because it is underpinned by an adequate understanding of rights and obligations. However, the younger generation exposed to polarization and misleading information may develop fragmented and incoherent views. This can weaken social cohesion and society's ability to achieve consensus on important issues. The future of democracy heavily depends on the quality of the legal and moral awareness of the younger generation who will become future leaders and citizens. Investment in digital literacy education and the reinforcement of moral values serves as an investment in the sustainability of democracy itself. The current challenge is how to harness the positive potential of social media while minimizing its negative risks for the development of the younger generation.

CONCLUSION

Social media has a significant influence on the legal and moral awareness of the younger generation through two main pathways: democratic education and threatening polarization. Access to broader legal information through digital platforms provides opportunities for the younger generation to learn about their rights and justice issues that may have previously been inaccessible. Nevertheless, the characteristics of social media that prioritize speed and emotional engagement often sacrifice the accuracy and depth of information necessary for mature understanding. Polarization reinforced by digital platform algorithms creates echo chambers that narrow the perspective of the younger generation on legal and moral issues. The rampant phenomenon of digital vigilante justice reflects a shift in justice practices from formal institutions toward public opinion formed on digital platforms. This practice threatens fundamental principles of justice such as the presumption of innocence and due process of law. The quality of legal and moral awareness formed through social media heavily depends on the digital literacy skills of the younger generation and the support of their social environment. Comprehensive digital literacy education and the active involvement of families and communities are key to maximizing the positive potential of social media.

Schools and educational institutions need to develop programs that equip the younger generation with the ability to evaluate the credibility of legal and moral information on social media. Teachers and educators need to receive adequate training on the dynamics of social media and how to guide students in navigating complex information. Families as primary socialization agents also need to be supported with resources and information to accompany their children in responsible social media use. Communities and civil society organizations can play a role in providing spaces for discussion and reflection on developing legal and moral issues on social media. Regulations regarding the responsibility of social media platforms toward circulating content and the protection of digital judgment victims need to be strengthened. Suggestions for future research include conducting empirical studies on the effectiveness of various digital literacy education models in improving the legal and moral awareness of the younger generation.

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