



Public Opinion Throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic (Media Literacy Study on the Spread and Impact of Covid-19)

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Abstract. Public opinion is a number of ideas, ideas, hopes, opinions of a number of people who may be heterogeneous about a problem/thing that happens. Some time ago, Indonesia, like other countries, experienced the COVID-19 pandemic for about 3 more years. Various impacts were felt during the pandemic, starting from health, economic, educational, political, community mental health and social impacts. Various measures have been taken by the government, starting from large-scale regional quarantines to laying off workers in various sectors, with the exception of the health care sector, during the pandemic. The big impact of the spread of Covid-19 and the impact of government policies in handling it, here the role of the community in conveying ideas, thoughts, opinions, etc. is very important. During the COVID-19 period from 2019 to 2022, many public opinions emerged, both in various online media, electronic media and print media. For this reason, this research discusses public opinion throughout the Covid-19 pandemic with media literacy studies on the spread and impact of COVID-19. This study chose whatsapp media as the media studied regarding the spread and impact of COVID-19. The selection of whatsapp media was carried out considering that this social media is one of the most widely used media by people in Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to find out public opinion on the spread and impact of COVID-19 and public opinion on policies implemented by the government to overcome the spread and impact of corona. The research method used is through conversation analysis in the Bianglala whatsapp group. The outputs targeted in this research are indexed international proceedings and international conferences

Keywords: Public opinion, Media Literacy, Whatsapp.

1 Introduction

Indonesia, like other countries in the world, has faced a corona disease pandemic caused by the covid-19 virus. At the beginning of March 2020, two positive corona patients were detected in Depok, West Java. Along with the development of the situation, where the Indonesian people are also facing the flow of Eid homecoming, the spread of Covid-19 is increasingly endemic, and has hit almost all provinces in the territory of the Republic of Indonesia. The disease, which originally originated in

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Wuhan, China, has since spread to almost all countries in the world. Data as of March 15 2023, globally, there were 235 countries infected with this disease with 759,408,703 positive confirmed COVID-19 data and 6,866,434 people died. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, data on 6,739,669 confirmed positive patients for COVID-19, 6,575,350 recovered patients and 160,953 deaths (covid19.go.id, 2023).

Although now in Indonesia itself, there is less and less news about COVID-19, this is evident from the disappearance of health protocols for handling Covid such as wearing masks, washing hands with soap and not crowding. Now, the people of Indonesia have their activities as usual. The economic sector is back in operation, as is tourism, education and other business sectors. Government of Indonesia, when COVID happened in Indonesia. made various efforts to contain the spread of Covid-19. At first glance at the early days of the spread of this disease, when the first case was found in Depok, the government did not immediately carry out a regional quarantine like in other countries, there were even several officials in Indonesia who conveyed to the public that Corona is not a dangerous disease, but only a disease like the common cold which can heal by itself. The government's lack of seriousness in overcoming the spread of the disease at the start of the discovery of PDP (positive patients), eventually led to a massive spread of the disease. Moreover, then the Indonesian people are facing Eid, where there is a tradition of going home to their hometown which is usually carried out by the Muslim community. Regulations that seemed to change from the government which then made the spread of the disease more widespread throughout Indonesia. Even though the government finally agreed that Covid-19 was a dangerous disease and needed immediate treatment, however This disease has already spread to almost all provinces in the territory of the Republic of Indonesia.

To overcome the spread of Covid-19, the government at that time then rolled out a Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) policy, namely limiting people to be in a place in large numbers. The PSBB program then encourages various business actors in the economic sector and other sectors to take actions in the form of laying off employees/employees, terminating employment, stopping production and so on. The effect of this PSBB is indeed very large. The community is locked, the community is not allowed to visit tourist attractions, and they are even prohibited from going home. The public is encouraged to stay at home during the Covid pandemic 19. Schools were closed, starting from the preschool level, elementary school, junior high school, public high school to Islamic boarding schools. So the community, especially those who work then work at home online and students study from home online. This change in habit certainly brings up various effects, both positive and negative effects. However, in this study, researchers will not discuss the effects of the covid-19 pandemic but will focus on public opinion about the spread of covid-19 and government policies to overcome it. After the Indonesian government carried out a regional quarantine with the term Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) for approximately three months, namely from mid-March to June 8 2020, Indonesia then entered the New Normal period, namely a situation where people can carry out their activities as usual. but by complying with the health protocol for handling Covid-19, with health proto-

cols: using a mask, washing hands with soap or using a handsanitizer and physical distance/not crowding.

In dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, due to different policies from the government in terms of handling Covid, the community reacted to it through various conversations, and sharing information with each other via WhatsApp social media. WhatsApp social media is the choice in this study considering WhatsApp is a popular media with 83% of internet users in Indonesia. This means that WhatsApp is the most widely used communication medium by the people of Indonesia. The WhatsApp used in this study is the Bianglala WhatsApp group (WAG). WAG Bianglala is a WAG whose members consist of various layers of leaders, stakeholders, community leaders and policy makers in Garut Regency. In addition, this study also analyzes media literacy skills, where various hoax messages and information about COVID-19 and including the COVID-19 vaccine are circulating. This research further analyzes the opinions that have developed in the community about the spread and impact of Covid-19 through the WhatsApp application.

1.1 Specific Research Purposes

The specific objectives of this research are:

1. To find out public opinion on the spread and impact of COVID-19 through WhatsApp social media. Public opinion in this research is public opinion contained in the Bianglala WhatsApp Group, where each member of the Bianglala consists of the Regent, Deputy Regent, Police Chief, Members of the Garut Regency Regional People's Representative Council, Heads of Departments, Stakeholders, and the general public such as retirees, traders, farmers, teachers and lecturers as well as all community members who are members of Bianglala WAG.
2. To find out public opinion about government policies in dealing with the spread of Covid-19. Because in Bianglala WAG there are various elements of society, where they exchange ideas, criticize various general conditions such as electricity rates, potholes, social services, health and so on, the Bianglala WAG also becomes a medium for sharing and discussion as well as analysis of various government regulations, their implementation and also evaluation, including government policies regarding COVID-19.
3. To find out the ability of media literacy in communities affected by COVID-19. Through WAG Bianglala, members exchange information and check the truth of the information circulating if it is considered doubtful or indicates hoax information. They are used to checking news facts by mentioning one of the interested parties who is also a member of the Ferris Wheel. For example, there was a Bianglala member who reported that COVID was initially transmitted by kelong wewe or bats, so other Bianglala members sought the truth of this information through the Health Service or other valid sources. This shows that media literacy has been developed among some Bianglala members.

1.2 Research Objectives And Benefits

The promised results in this study are:

- 1) Classification of public opinion that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic through the WhatsApp group media
- 2) Define government policies that have been implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 3) Knowing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through the various public opinions studied
- 4) Understanding the extent of understanding of the subject under study regarding media literacy during the COVID-19 pandemic

2 Literature Review

2.1 Opini Publik

According to Frazier Moore (2004), public opinion is an expression of belief that is shared among members of a group or public regarding a controversial issue that concerns the public interest (Gurupendidikan.co.id, 2022). According to Soenarjo, public opinion in Indonesian is often translated as general opinion, thus public is translated as general while opinion is translated as opinion. Public opinion comes from the English Public Opinion. According to Sastropetro, the term public opinion is often used to refer to the collective opinions of a number of people. In contrast to the crowd, the public is more of a group that is not a unit. Interaction occurs indirectly through communication tools, such as serial private conversations, through rumors, through newspapers, radio, television and films. These connecting tools allow the “public” to have a wider and larger following. According to William Albiq, public opinion is the sum of individual opinions obtained through debate and public opinion is the result of interactions between individuals in a public. Meanwhile, according to Astrid, public opinion is a general characteristic that is investigated in communication science and is a form of (social) group that is collective and not permanent.

Public opinion consists of two word components, namely public and opinion. The definition of the public is a group that has the same interest in a particular issue. Public opinion represents an agreement that begins with people's attitudes towards issues that are still questionable. Seitel (in Soemirat and Ardianto, 2004) states that attitudes are based on a number of characteristics, namely:

1. Personal, physical, emotional elements of an individual including condition, age and social status.
2. Culture, environment and lifestyle in certain geographic areas, such as Japanese people, are different from Americans or rural people in America.
3. Education, the level and quality of a person's education.
4. Family (people's roof), a kind of person's grass roots
5. Religion, a belief system about God or the supernatural.
6. Social level, position in society, changes in a person's social status

7. Race, ethnic/tribal origin (www.nsd.co.id, 2020).

A person's behavior and his attitude are closely related. This means that a person's behavior has a lot of influence on everyday life. According to Effendy, to obtain clarity regarding public opinion, it is necessary to explain other types of opinion related to public opinion:

1. Individual Opinion. Individual opinion is an individual's opinion regarding something that is happening in society. The opinion can agree or disagree.
2. Personal Opinion. It is a person's original opinion regarding a social issue. A person's opinion is not necessarily their own opinion, perhaps they take over someone else's opinion because they agree with it. Then in a gossip he communicates it to others as his own opinion but not an opinion personal.
3. Group Opinion. Group opinions regarding social issues that concern the interests of many people, including the group of people mentioned above.
4. Majority Opinion. The majority of people's opinions regarding an issue are pro or con. Maybe someone has a different opinion. Usually it is in an open forum in the form of an institution, for example parliament so that the number of pros and cons can be calculated.
5. Minority Opinion. The opposite of the majority opinion. Minority opinion is the opinion of people relatively small in number compared to their number regarding a social issue.
6. Mass Opinion. It is a continuation stage of public opinion. This mass opinion turns into physical action.
7. General Opinion. Public opinion is the same opinion of everyone in a society regarding issues involving the public interest (Soemirat, 2012).

According to Arifin, public opinion is the opinion of the average individual in society as a result of indirect discussions carried out to solve social problems, especially those created by the mass media. For this reason, public opinion will only be formed if there are issues developed by the mass media (press, film, radio and television). Elements of opinion According to Arifin, the public consists of three elements, first, there are issues (events or words) that are actual, important and concern the public interest which are broadcast through the mass media. Second, there are a number of people who discuss the issue, until they come to an agreement regarding their attitudes, opinions and views. Third, their opinions are expressed or expressed in oral, written and gestures. while according to Blumer in Arifin, public opinion does not have to be the unanimous opinion of everyone, but only the opinion of a number of persons. Not absolutely the majority opinion, but also the minority opinion. Even just someone's opinion in the sense of ruling elite or influential minority (Arifin, 2008).

2.2 Whatsapp social media

There are several types of social media, including:

- 1) Social networking media (social networking). According to Saxena in Nasrullah, social networking is social media that allows its members to interact with each other through messages, photos and videos so that they can attract the attention of other users. All information published via this social network is in real time as to what is happening. Social networks provide several contents for their users so that users have space to communicate and interact (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opini_publik, 2020). Examples of types of social networks include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Line and Path.
- 2) Online journal (blog). Blogs are social media that make it easy for users to upload their activities, discuss and share links, websites, information, and so on. The character of a blog is that it is used to publish content related to its users, both by individuals and companies/business institutions according to their needs (Nasrullah, 2017).
- 3) Media sharing (media sharing). Media sharing is social media that provides facilities for users to share media such as documents (files), video, audio, images and other media. Through this sharing media, members or users can also save various images and videos online. Some examples of media sharing include YouTube, Flickr, Photo bucket, and also WhatsApp.

2.3 Media Literacy

Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate information in various forms of media. Media literacy is a set of perspectives that are actively used when accessing mass media to interpret the messages encountered. According to Art Silverblatt, the definition of media literacy has several elements, including:

1. awareness of the influence of media on individuals and society
2. understanding of the mass communication process,
3. developing strategies to be able to analyze and discuss literacy media messages,
4. awareness that media content is text that describes culture and ourselves at this time, and
5. develop enjoyment, understanding and appreciation for the content of literacy media (Abdhul, 2021).

Media literacy as the ability to recognize, understand and criticize media content, requires intelligence and skills to carry it out. In this case, it is important to understand that media literacy as an ability to understand the media, requires guidance in understanding the content of the media itself, so that people who are literate will be able to understand the direction of the information and messages received, interpret them and even create the media content themselves.

2.4 State of The Art

The state of the art in this research is to differentiate the research that will be carried out According to Soenarjo, public opinion in Indonesian is often translated as general

opinion, thus public is translated as general while opinion is translated as opinion. Public opinion comes from the English Public Opinion. According to Sastropetro, the term public opinion is often used to refer to the collective opinions of a number of people. In contrast to the crowd, the public is more of a group that is not a unit. Interaction occurs indirectly through communication tools, such as serial private conversations, through rumors, through newspapers, radio, television and films. These connecting tools allow the “public” to have a wider and larger following. According to William Albiq, public opinion is the sum of individual opinions obtained through debate and public opinion is the result of interactions between individuals in a public. Meanwhile, according to Astrid, public opinion is a general characteristic that is investigated in communication science and is a form of (social) group that is collective and not permanent. from the research that has been done, with previous research both national and international research, in the form of research results and scientific journals, group research and published dissertations. A brief description of the state of the art is described as follows.

Table 1. State of the art

No	Researcher	Equality	Difference
1.	Fauzi Syarief. Title: "Use of Social Media in the Process of Forming Public Opinions (Sby Twitter Discourse Analysis)". Jurnal Komunikasi, Volume VIII Nomor 3, September 2017 (Syarief, 2017).	This study both examines public opinion	Research differences exist in the use of social media and methodology
2.	Christiany Juditha. Title: Public Opinion Against the Case "KPK Lawan Polisi" on Twitter Social Media. Jurnal Pekommas, Vol. 17 No. 2, Agustus 2014: 61-70 (Juditha, 2014)	This study both examines public opinion	Differences in research exist in the media used (twitter) and the focus of the research.
3.	Sigit Hardiyanto. Title: Descriptive Study Regarding Student Opinion Against the Whatsapp Application Phenomenon at Muhammadiyah University of South Tapanuli. Jurnal ilmiah Moqoddimah: jurnal ilmu sosial, politik dan humaniora Volume 3 Nomor 2 (Hardiyanto, 2019).	The research equation lies in the use of whatsapp media	The difference is in the object of research, namely in the WhatsApp application phenomenon, while the research conducted by researchers focuses on the opinion of the spread of Covid-19

3 Research Method

This study uses a qualitative methodology, with a descriptive study. In a qualitative perspective, the nature of reality is multiple, complicated, pseudo, dynamic (easily changing), constructed and holistic, the truth of reality is relative, where the aim of

qualitative research is to deal with things that are special not only open behavior but also processes that are not spoken, emphasizing individual differences, making ethical/aesthetic judgments on specific (communication) phenomena (Mulyana, 2010). The researcher chose a qualitative approach because this research is natural and involves emotions, thoughts, hopes, ideas and individual interactions in Whatsapp media. The informants in this research are WAG Bianglala members who have opinions about the spread of Covid 19, namely the Head of the Cipanas Community Health Center, Head of the XI Education Service (KCD) of Garut Regency, Head of the Non-Fire Services Section of the Fire and Rescue Service, Head of the Mekarmukti District Volleyball Tournament Committee. Data collection was carried out by means of open interviews and observation. Interviews were conducted with WhatsApp Group users while observations were made on the opinions that developed on WhatsApp. This research was carried out until August 2023.

4 Results and Discussion

Research data shows that the opinion built on the WhatsApp Group about Covid-19 is in the form of public opinion about the spread of Covid-19 through WhatsApp social media and public opinion about government policies in overcoming the spread of Covid-19. Public opinion about the spread of Covid-19 consists of 7 things, namely:

- 1) Dissemination of handling the transmission of Covid-19
- 2) Study during the covid-19 period
- 3) Covid-19 among local officials
- 4) Hoax about Covid
- 5) Measures to prevent transmission of Covid
- 6) Community activities during the pandemic
- 7) The number of Corona sufferers

For more details, the research results are shown in the following table

Table 2. Main things in public opinion on the Bianglala WhatsApp Group regarding the spread of COVID-19

No	Public opinion about	Details
1	Dissemination of handling the transmission of Covid-19	Socialization on handling Covid-19 transmission is being carried out by the Government and several agencies such as Community Health Centers which are intensively conducting outreach. One of them is the Cipanas Health Center which is located in the center of the Cipanas hot springs tourist attraction, Tarogong Kaler District, Garut Regency which is socializing the handling of Covid-19 transmission to various groups. Public awareness of health protocols is starting to grow, especially in hotels and accommodation, including swab tests. This is due to continuous outreach, even though before hearing about the rapid test, people were afraid, especially of the swab test.
2	Study during the	School learning during the Covid-19 period is planned to take place

No	Public opinion about	Details
	covid-19 period	face-to-face, namely schools in the green and yellow zones can apply for face-to-face distribution, permission from the regional government through the provincial education office or city district education office.
3	Covid-19 among local officials	There has been a lot of news about West Java DPRD members being exposed to COVID-19. Responding to this, one of the WAG members said that confirmation that a DPRD member was positive for COVID would have an impact on the social assistance that the community would receive. For this reason, mass swab tests were carried out and all levels of the Garut DPRD and honorary council members carried out swab tests. The same thing was also done for employees within the Garut Regency Government.
4	Hoax about Covid	The hoax news about Covid was informed by one of the Bianglala WAG members who conveyed an apology from Ero Juhro alias Abah Uwo who said the Corona virus came from Kalongwewe and claimed to be able to destroy Covid-19.
5	Measures to prevent transmission of Covid	The Fire and Rescue Service (Disdamkar), sprayed disinfectant at the Cilawu Community Health Center, Garut Vocational School 10 Complex, Cilawu Regency Office and sprayed the Regional Secretariat, as well as the Garut Hall involving 1 unit of drinking water car with a capacity of 5,000 liters with 4 personnel equipped with PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) .
6	Community activities during the pandemic	Community activities during the pandemic include holding a volleyball tournament to celebrate Indonesian Independence in Mekarmukti District, Garut Regency. Tournament participants are required to comply with health protocols during the competition. Before competing, players must wash their hands first, have their body temperature checked, and must wear a mask.



Fig. 1. Residents receive direct cash assistance

Public opinion on government policies in overcoming the spread of COVID-19 consists of:

- 1) Economic sector recovery policy through Culinary Night activities
- 2) August 17th Commemoration
- 3) Social service
- 4) Regent Regulation concerning Guidelines for Implementing Discipline and Law Enforcement of the Covid-19 Health Protocol

This is as seen in table 3 below

Table 3. Public opinion regarding government policy

No	Public opinion about government policy	Details
1	Economic sector recovery policy through Culinary Night activities	The Garut Regency Government is aggressively pursuing economic recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic by continuing to implement health protocols. One of them is through the Garut Culinary Night event which was officially opened by the Regent of Garut Rudy Gunawan, in the courtyard of the Garut Pendopo. A variety of delicious culinary delights that have gone through clinical trials are presented with the results of small and medium enterprises (UKM) in Garut Regency. The Garut Regency Government will also provide assistance to participants through small and medium business loans (KUKM) after receiving recommendations from the ICA (Indonesia Chef Association).
2	August 17th Commemoration	Deputy Regent Helmi Budiman stated that the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indone-

3	Social service	<p>sia (RI) in Garut Regency would not be busy like a carnival or activities involving many people, to avoid the spread of Covid-19. Including crowd activities in the framework of the Republic of Indonesia's Independence Day must be eliminated in the common interest of maintaining health in the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak. However, for the red and white flag raising ceremony, he continued, the plan would be to limit the public and implement health regulations such as wearing masks.</p>
		<p>Samarang Police Chief, Kompol Supian BJ accompanied by Forkopimcam, Samarang, Garut, carried out Social Service (Bhaksos) simultaneously in Samarang and other areas throughout Indonesia on direct orders from the DPRD. The National Police Chief helps residents affected by Covid 19 in an unstable economic situation. The amount distributed in the form of basic food packages was 25 (twenty five) packages. This social service activity is in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of Indonesia's independence.</p>
4	Guidelines for Regent's Regulations for Implementing Discipline and Law Enforcement of the Covid 19 Protocol	<p>The Garut Regency Government is currently drafting a Regent's Regulation (Perbup) regarding the implementation of discipline and law enforcement of the Covid-19 health protocol. If it has been ratified, the Regency Regulation can impose sanctions for violators of health protocols. Garut Deputy Regent Helmi Budiman said the Regency Regulation was still in the revision stage and had been reported to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Later there will be sanctions and fines for those who do not comply with health protocols. These sanctions include a fine of Rp. 100,000,- for those who do not wear masks</p>

The following are the findings from the research results which are described in the following figure.

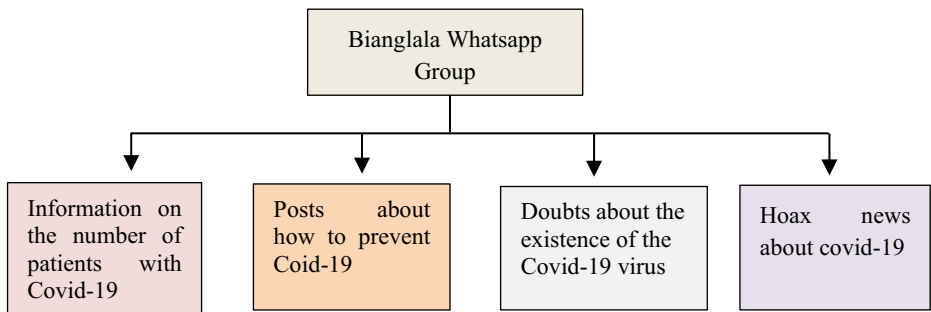


Fig. 2. Model of Information Literacy

In another study conducted by Resha Resmawati Shaleha et al which was published in the journal *Pharmacoscrypt* Volume 5 No. August 2 2022 entitled *Public Opinion In Facing The Covid-19 Virus Pandemic*. Results of a survey conducted on 376 respondents, related to opinion questions, myths and facts related to covid are stated in the following table (Shaleha, 2022), (In this research, the researcher took several research results to compare with the results of his own research as follows)

Table 4. Results of other researchers regarding public opinion during Covid-19

Question	Percentage				
	strongly disagree	don't agree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
Someone can be infected with Covid-19 by purchasing the product sent from China	12,50	47,10	29,80	8,20	2,40
Vitamin C supplements will can fully lift Covid-19	4,00	34,60	40,70	18,90	1,90
Saline oil, garlic and Sesame can prevent Covid-19	4,00	19,40	59,00	16,50	1,30
The Covid-19 outbreak started because people eat meat or food made from bat	5,10	22,90	42,60	26,60	3,00
I support that government impose a ban travel/going abroad city/traveling	2,70	9,30	24,70	39,60	24,00

There is a similarity in public opinion regarding hoax information that the Covid-19 outbreak started because people eat meat or food made from bats, where in research conducted by researchers there is an opinion regarding the origin of COVID which came from bats.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Public opinion regarding information on the spread of Covid-19

The conclusion of this study is that public opinion about the spread of Covid-19 contained in the Bianglala and X-Ser WhatsApp Groups is neutral, meaning that if there is information that is unclear or doubtful, then other WWAG members will usually look for clear sources of news. In addition, public opinion related to the spread of corona. This can be seen from posts or members' opinions if there are differences of opinion between WAG members. Apart from that, this WAG mostly discussed the spread of Covid-19, fears of transmission and calls for compliance with health protocols. Opinions regarding information on the spread of Covid-19 include Socialization on Handling the Spread of Covid-19, School Learning during the Covid period, Regional Officials who are positive for Corona, Hoax News about Covid, Actions to

Prevent the Transmission of Covid-19, Community Activities During the Pandemic and the number of corona sufferers.

5.2 Public opinion on government policies in dealing with the spread of Covid-19.

Public opinion on government policy in dealing with the spread of Covid-19 in the Bianglala WAG and X-Ser contains the recovery of the Economic Sector through the 2020 Garut Culinary Night Policy, August 17 commemoration activities, social services and Guidelines for Regent Regulations Implementation of Discipline and Law Enforcement of the 19 Covid Health Protocol

5.3 Suggestion

Public space in the media is important, especially in this globalization era. During the era of globalization, there was a massive exchange of information, especially in cyber/digital world. This then creates an information society, namely a society that has made information a daily necessity. Academically, this research is expected to be followed up for the development of new media theory and theories of communication psychology. While practically, this research is expected to be input for the development of the benefits of social media in the eyes of users

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