

DIGITALIZATION OF MARGINALIZED WOMEN: NEW SPACES FOR THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF HOUSEWIVES IN RURAL AREAS

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ABSTRACT

Limited access of rural women to economic resources and digital information remains a major barrier to improving family welfare, especially amid the increasingly dominant digital economy. This community engagement activity aims to empower housewives in Sumurdalam Village, Besuk District, Probolinggo Regency, to utilize social media as a means of generating income from home. The method employed is Participatory Action Research (PAR), involving stages of potential identification, digital skills training, hands-on practice, and participatory evaluation with community members. Data were analyzed qualitatively through observation, interviews, and documentation conducted throughout the mentoring process. The results indicate an improvement in digital literacy and in the ability of housewives to market local products through Shopee Affiliate and TikTok Shop. The activity recommends the need for sustained support through advanced training, stable internet access, and collaboration with village governments to create an inclusive and sustainable digital ecosystem for rural women.

Keywords: Women's empowerment, housewives, digital economy

I. INTRODUCTION

In the era of digital transformation, social media is not only a space for communication but also a promising economic opportunity, including for women in rural areas (Fauziah, Saputri, & Herlambang, 2024). However, in reality, many housewives in villages still lack basic digital skills to utilize social media as a productive tool. This condition indicates an urgency to improve the digital literacy of rural women so that they are able to adapt and become economically empowered from home.

In an increasingly developing digital era, humans can be said to be unable to live without the internet and social media. Social media allows everyone to become subjects, actors, and sources of communication, rather than merely readers or viewers as in mass media (Hamzah & Putri, 2020). Many people have successfully utilized social media to generate income and improve their economic well-being (Purbohastuti, 2017); however, there are still many community members who do not understand how to use social media for business purposes and to earn additional income (Sembiring et al., 2025).

The development of social media has become increasingly widespread across society. From children to the elderly, people are inseparable from social media (Triyana, 2018). Social media has become an important part of modern life, not only as a communication tool and source of information but also as a means of generating income without having to leave home (Wulandari et al., 2020). With rapid technological advancements, social media has become a platform that can be used for various purposes (Wijayanto, Remawati, & Fitriani, 2023).

Social media has opened new opportunities for generating income and achieving personal goals. By understanding how to use these platforms effectively, individuals can improve their quality of life and achieve financial success (Malawat & Hariyanto, 2024). Social media also differs from other forms of media, particularly in its high speed of information dissemination (Fauziah et al., 2024).

Generating income from social media can be done in various ways, such as: (1) Influencer Marketing: becoming a social media influencer and promoting products or services to earn commissions; (2) Content Creation: producing engaging content and earning income from advertisements, sponsorships, or donations; (3) E-Commerce: selling products online through social media platforms and earning revenue from sales; (4) Affiliate Marketing: promoting other people's products or services and earning commissions from each resulting sale; and (5) Sponsored Content: creating content sponsored by companies or brands to generate income (Sembiring et al., 2025; Miswaty, Sukimin, & Juwari, 2022).

Sumurdalam Village, Besuk District, Probolinggo Regency, was selected as a strategic location for a socialization program themed "Digitally Literate Mothers: Earning Income from Social Media Without Leaving Home." This program aims to increase income, awareness, skills, and self-confidence among housewives in utilizing social media, which ultimately can contribute to improving the quality of family life (Hudayana et al., 2019). The main focus of generating income from social media lies in leveraging digital platforms to support financial goals without having to leave home. Creating engaging content to earn income from advertisements, sponsorships, or donations is one potential strategy, as is becoming an influencer or selling products through social media (Sembiring et al., 2025).

Various previous studies indicate that digital literacy plays a crucial role in promoting women's economic independence, particularly in rural areas. A study by Rahmawati (2021) highlights that housewives who receive digital training tend to be more adaptive in using platforms such as Facebook Marketplace and WhatsApp Business to market home-based products. Another study by Putri and Nugroho (2020) emphasizes that social media is not merely a communication tool but also an effective empowerment instrument when accompanied by continuous training and community-based approaches. However, most of these studies remain top-down in nature, with women's active roles often limited to being passive training participants.

On the other hand, participatory approaches such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) have rarely been applied specifically to the context of rural women seeking to utilize social media for economic purposes. Research by Sari et al. (2022) represents one of the few attempts to apply a participatory approach in the development of digital-based micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), yet it does not specifically target housewives. This gap indicates the need for locally grounded interventions that actively involve women throughout the entire process. Accordingly, this community engagement initiative seeks to fill this gap by offering a PAR-based approach to digital training for rural housewives, emphasizing not only skills enhancement but also sustainable social and economic transformation.

Previous studies further demonstrate that digital literacy is essential in supporting women's economic independence. Rahmawati (2021) shows that housewives who receive digital training are more adaptive in utilizing social media for product marketing. Putri and Nugroho (2020) also affirm that social media is effective as an empowerment tool when accompanied by continuous training. Nevertheless, most studies still employ a top-down approach.

This community engagement program aims to mentor and empower housewives through digital literacy training based on a participatory approach (Participatory Action Research), which enables women's active involvement at every stage of the activities, from planning to evaluation (Hudayana et al., 2019). Meanwhile, participatory approaches such as PAR are still rarely used specifically in the context of empowering rural women through social media. Although Sari et al. (2022) attempted to apply this approach in digital MSMEs, it did not focus on housewives. Therefore, this initiative fills that gap by introducing a sustainable, community-based digital training model tailored to rural housewives.

II. METHODOLOGY

The community engagement method employed in this program is the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. Based on its fundamental principles, PAR has two main objectives. First, it seeks to generate knowledge and concrete actions that are beneficial to the community through research or action; second, it aims to educate the community by developing and utilizing their own knowledge. PAR emphasizes that knowledge can play a direct and practical role in community life, and that lived experience can produce valid and applicable knowledge.

In PAR, researchers integrate themselves with the community being studied. PAR prioritizes the value of knowledge derived from experience and direct practice. Community members are expected to take the lead in formulating hypotheses, research designs, methods, and analytical approaches. The goal is for the community to fully understand the problems they seek to solve and to know the steps required to address them. While trends in education over recent decades may have led to the domestication of educational action research, this approach underscores the importance of maintaining the quality and transformative potential of participatory action research.

Like other forms of social research, PAR aims to bring about change in community life. What distinguishes PAR is that change and action are integral components and must provide learning value for the community as well as be sustainable. PAR is particularly useful for fostering direct community development through its participatory and learning-oriented characteristics.

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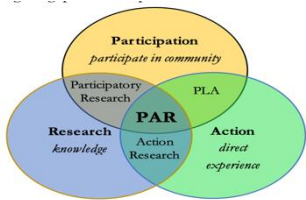


Diagram of PAR

(Source: adaptasi dari Chevalier & Buckles, 2022)

From the diagram, it can be seen that through the PAR approach, the women are directly involved in identifying their personal and environmental potentials, expressing the obstacles they face in utilizing digital technology, and formulating solutions that are appropriate to local conditions. This process also strengthens their sense of ownership and increases their motivation to learn and adapt to technological developments.

Moreover, PAR enables dialogue among various stakeholders, such as facilitators and village government officials, ensuring that the program is genuinely designed based on the real needs of the community. This approach creates an inclusive and collaborative discussion environment that aligns with the characteristics of rural communities. Through the PAR method, the program aims not only to enhance the digital skills of housewives but also to build self-confidence, foster economic independence, and strengthen social networks that support the creation of a more empowered and adaptive village in response to contemporary changes.

III. RESULTS

Overview of the Assisted Location

Housewives in Sumur Dalam Village, Besuk District, Probolinggo Regency, are the main participants in the program "Digitally Literate Mothers: Earning Income from Social Media Without Leaving Home." Most of them are housewives who also play an active role in community activities within the village. They come from diverse educational and occupational backgrounds; however, the majority are not yet familiar with using social media as a means of generating income. The lack of training and digital skills remains the primary obstacle to leveraging internet-based economic opportunities.

Based on observations and interactions during the program, it was found that members of the PKK (Family Welfare Movement) have a strong interest in learning about new opportunities that can help improve family income, especially those that can be carried out from home. However, their understanding of how to utilize social media for productive activities such as business promotion, product marketing, or personal branding is still relatively low.

This condition constitutes an important background for the implementation of the socialization program “Digitally Literate Mothers: Earning Income from Social Media Without Leaving Home,” which aims to provide insight and motivation for mothers to become more technologically literate and to utilize social media wisely and productively. The program also seeks to encourage the emergence of creative and digitally independent mothers, without requiring them to abandon their primary roles within the family.

Throughout the program, participants demonstrated active involvement, enthusiasm, and a strong willingness to try new things related to the digital world. This indicates that, with an appropriate approach, members of the PKK have significant potential to develop as household-scale digital economic actors. This mentoring initiative aims to empower mothers to become digitally literate and capable of using social media productively, particularly in marketing products. Through the training, participants were introduced to popular digital platforms such as Shopee Affiliate and TikTok, and were provided with practical guidance on creating engaging content, implementing online promotion strategies, and practicing ethical business conduct on social media.

Sumur Dalam Village was selected due to its strong human resource potential, despite ongoing challenges in access to and utilization of digital technology. With this mentoring program, it is expected that mothers will be able to use social media intelligently and creatively to generate additional income without having to leave home.

The program also involved village officials to strengthen support for technology-based women’s empowerment. By enhancing the digital literacy of housewives, this activity is expected to produce long-term positive impacts, not only on family economic conditions but also on the overall development of the village.

Digital Literacy Socialization for Mothers

Socialization is one of the main methods used in community service activities, serving to disseminate information, build awareness, and encourage changes in people’s understanding and behavior toward certain issues or opportunities. In a broader sense, socialization is the process through which individuals or groups learn and internalize values, knowledge, and skills in order to participate actively in social life.

In the context of this program, socialization functions as a bridge between the rapidly developing digital knowledge and the conditions of the local community, particularly female community cadres in Sumur Dalam Village. The purpose of this socialization is not merely to convey information, but also to create new understanding, enhance literacy, and motivate participants to adapt to societal changes while remaining actively engaged from home.

From an academic perspective, scholars have offered insights that enrich the understanding of the concept of socialization. Soekanto defines socialization as a learning process through which individuals recognize prevailing social and cultural values in order to perform their roles in society. Meanwhile, Koentjaraningrat emphasizes that socialization serves as a means for individuals to adapt to their social groups through the learning of norms and social customs. According to Peter L. Berger, socialization is a process of internalization, in which individuals not only become aware of certain values but also integrate them into their ways of thinking and acting.

Through this approach, socialization in the community service program in Sumur Dalam Village was designed not as a one-way lecture, but as a two-way learning process. Participants were actively involved in discussions, simulations, and hands-on practice, enabling a more comprehensive and contextual understanding. This is important, as the success of socialization is largely determined by the relevance of the material to participants' needs, backgrounds, and life experiences.

Thus, socialization is not merely a means of delivering material, but a strategy of empowerment that positions the community as active subjects in the process of change. In this program, socialization serves as a starting point for creating a more digitally aware community, capable of using information wisely and open to new opportunities relevant to their daily lives.

Social media is one of the main products of developments in information and communication technology that has brought significant changes in how people interact, access information, and engage in economic activities. In the context of community service activities, social media is viewed not only as a communication tool, but also as a means of empowerment, education, and an entry point to inclusive digital economic access, including for women in rural areas.

Several scholarly definitions of social media help reinforce an understanding of the importance of these platforms in society: According to Kaplan and Haenlein, social media is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.” Andreas M. Kaplan further explains that social media is an internet-based communication medium that enables individuals to interact, share information, and form online communities. From Nasrullah’s perspective, social media is media designed to facilitate social interaction via the internet, allowing users to share messages in the form of text, audio, images, and videos either in real time or asynchronously.

Based on these perspectives, in this community service program, socialization was directed toward helping female cadres understand that social media can be utilized productively. They were not only introduced to the technical features of social media, but also guided on how to use it to build digital presence, create valuable content, and access economic opportunities from home. The socialization activities were conducted through presentations, participatory discussions, and hands-on practice using available devices, with language and approaches tailored to participants’ backgrounds. In this way, the female cadres were encouraged to understand that social media is not merely a space for entertainment, but also a strategic tool for supporting family welfare when used wisely and purposefully.

Impact of Change

The socialization activity “Digitally Literate Mothers: Earning Income from Social Media Without Leaving Home through Shopee and TikTok Affiliate Programs,” conducted in Sumur Dalam Village, successfully generated tangible impacts on improving digital literacy and fostering economic self-awareness among female community cadres. Prior to this activity, most participants were unfamiliar with the concept of affiliate programs and the potential income that could be earned by sharing product links through social media.

After participating in the series of socialization sessions, the participants began to understand the steps involved in becoming affiliates, including creating Shopee Affiliate and TikTok Affiliate accounts, selecting products, sharing affiliate links, and applying strategies to attract buyers through simple content that can be created from home.

The observed impacts of change include:

- a) An increase in the digital knowledge of female cadres, particularly in utilizing social media as a source of income without the need to own products themselves.
- b) Increased confidence among participants in creating promotional content, such as short product review videos or recommendation posts shared on WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok.
- c) The emergence of participant initiatives to join affiliate programs, as evidenced by several mothers who immediately registered and began sharing product links after the training sessions.
- d) A shift in mindset from viewing social media solely as a source of entertainment to recognizing it as a platform with income-generating potential when used appropriately.
- e) The development of a collaborative spirit among participants, with female cadres supporting one another, providing feedback, and sharing experiences during the process of trying out affiliate programs.

Through this activity, the female cadres not only gained new knowledge but also acquired practical skills to take initial steps into the world of digital entrepreneurship. It is expected that they will become agents of change within their respective communities by spreading the digital skills and entrepreneurial spirit they have acquired to other women in Sumur Dalam Village.

IV. DISCUSSION

From an academic perspective, this activity integrates the concepts of digital literacy, technology-based community empowerment, and inclusive digital transformation, positioning social media as an empowerment space that is easily accessible and relevant to local conditions. With increased understanding of social media, participants are expected to be able to identify digital opportunities and to have the confidence to try new initiatives that align with their individual potential.

Affiliate programs represent a form of digital marketing that enables individuals to earn income by promoting products or services from specific platforms without having to own or directly manage those products. In the context of community empowerment—particularly for female cadres in Sumur Dalam Village—affiliate programs offer a practical solution for opening access to the digital economy with relatively minimal capital and lower risk.

Affiliate programs are part of a commission-based (performance-based) marketing strategy, in which affiliates earn commissions from each successful transaction made through shared referral links or codes. Platforms such as Shopee and TikTok Shop provide affiliate systems that are integrated with social media, allowing participants to leverage their social networks to market products effectively.

The socialization conducted in this activity aims to equip female cadres with a comprehensive understanding of affiliate program mechanisms, including how to register, select appropriate products, and apply link-sharing strategies to attract potential buyers. Participants are also guided to understand the importance of building credibility and trust in the digital space as key assets for affiliate success.

The socialization approach is implemented interactively, combining theoretical explanations with hands-on practice so that participants can gain direct experience in using affiliate programs. This approach is essential to ensure that understanding is not merely theoretical, but also practical and sustainable. From a digital empowerment perspective, affiliate programs represent a form of inclusive economic transformation, enabling rural women with limited time and mobility to remain economically productive without leaving their primary roles at home. This program also supports the enhancement of digital literacy and entrepreneurial skills that are critically needed in today's digital economy. With increased understanding and skills in affiliate programs, it is expected that the female cadres of Sumur Dalam Village will be able to leverage these opportunities to improve family income independently and sustainably.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The community service activity focusing on the economic empowerment of housewives through digital literacy in Sumurdalam Village demonstrates that rural women have significant potential to utilize social media as a productive tool and achieve economic independence. Through the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, participants not only gained technical knowledge but also experienced a shift in mindset in viewing social media as a workspace and a means of financial self-reliance. The improvement in digital skills has had a direct impact on their ability to market local products, build consumer networks, and increase their contribution to the family economy. This program recommends the need for sustained support from village governments, educational institutions, and the private sector to create an inclusive, gender-responsive digital ecosystem grounded in local potential.

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