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# IMPROVING DIGITAL LITERACY OF THE ELDERLY THROUGH A PARTICIPATION-BASED APPROACH: SERVICE PROGRAM AT BEKASI ELDERLY SCHOOL

**Muhammad Patria[1]***
[1]Universitas Dian Nusantara
email : muhammad.patria@undira.ac.id[1)]
* Corresponding Author

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***Abstrak***

*Program Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat ini bertujuan meningkatkan kemampuan lansia dalam menyaring dan menyikapi informasi digital secara bijak melalui pelatihan interaktif. Kegiatan ini dilaksanakan di Sekolah Lansia Kelurahan Jatisampurna, Kota Bekasi, dengan melibatkan 50 peserta. Metode pelaksanaan meliputi sosialisasi, pelatihan, penerapan teknologi, pendampingan, dan evaluasi. Materi yang disampaikan mencakup definisi hoaks, dampak negatifnya, ciri-ciri hoaks, serta langkah-langkah verifikasi informasi menggunakan teknologi seperti Google Fact Check dan Turn Back Hoax. Hasil evaluasi menunjukkan bahwa 96% peserta merasa sangat puas atau puas terhadap kegiatan ini. Selain itu, literasi digital peserta meningkat secara signifikan, dengan kepercayaan diri menggunakan teknologi meningkat sebesar 53%, kemampuan memverifikasi informasi meningkat 58%, dan pemahaman tentang hoaks meningkat hingga 50%. Program ini memberikan dampak positif berupa peningkatan literasi digital dan kesadaran peserta terhadap pentingnya memverifikasi informasi sebelum menyebarkannya. Program ini diharapkan dapat menjadi model edukasi literasi digital yang diterapkan pada lansia di wilayah lain untuk mengurangi dampak negatif dari hoaks dan meningkatkan pemberdayaan lansia dalam era digital.*

***Kata kunci**: Lansia; Literasi Digital; Hoaks; Edukasi Teknologi; Pengabdian Masyarakat.*

**Abstract**

This Community Service Program aims to enhance the elderly's ability to filter and respond to digital information through interactive training critically. The program was conducted at the Elderly School in Jatisampurna Subdistrict, Bekasi City, involving 50 participants. The implementation methods included socialization, training, technology application, mentoring, and evaluation. The materials covered the definition of hoaxes, their negative impacts, characteristics, and steps to verify information using technologies such as Google Fact Check and Turn Back Hoax. Evaluation results showed that 96% of participants were satisfied with the program. Additionally, digital literacy among participants significantly improved, with confidence in using technology increasing by 53%, the ability to verify information rising by 58%, and understanding of hoaxes increasing by 50%. This program had a positive impact by improving digital literacy and raising participants' awareness of the importance of verifying information before sharing it. The program is expected to serve as a model for digital literacy education that can be implemented for the elderly in other regions to mitigate the negative impacts of hoaxes and empower the elderly in the digital era.

**Keywords**: Elderly; Digital Literacy; Hoax; Technology Education; Community Service

## INTRODUCTION

The elderly population in Indonesia continues to increase every year. Based on BPS data, the number of elderly people in Indonesia in 2021 has reached 10.82% of the total population and is expected to continue to increase as life expectancy increases (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021). This population growth shows that Indonesia is heading toward the era of an aging population, where the existence of the elderly is one of the main concerns in social development (Al-Finatunni'mah & Nurhidayati, 2020; Perdamaian et al., 2020).

However, digital literacy among the elderly is still very low (Priscilla & Kasimun, 2021). The elderly often have difficulty adapting to the development of digital technology and smart devices that are part of their daily lives. A survey shows that only a small percentage of the elderly have enough knowledge to filter and respond to digital information wisely (Nashrulloh et al., 2023). This low digital literacy increases the risk of the elderly being exposed to false information or hoaxes that are widely spread through the internet and social media.

Nowadays, technological developments have changed the way information is disseminated, anyone can easily disseminate information through digital platforms, whether through social media, messaging apps, or websites (Machmud, 2012; Widjaja & Widodo, 2021). The open nature of this technology allows the dissemination of information in seconds, regardless of the truth or accuracy of the information (Yenmis et al., 2022). Although technology provides many benefits, its inclusive nature also opens up great opportunities for the spread of fake news or hoaxes.

Hoaxes or false information that is deliberately created to deceive or manipulate the recipients is still a global challenge, including in Indonesia. Based on a survey by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo) in 2023, around 56% of internet users in Indonesia have been exposed to hoaxes, and the elderly group is one of the most vulnerable. Seniors often have difficulty verifying digital information, especially due to low levels of digital literacy and the habit of trusting information from sources that are considered familiar, such as family or WhatsApp groups (Husna, 2023). Globally, data from the Reuters Institute 2022 shows that hoaxes tend to spread more easily among people over the age of 50, especially on social media platforms (Newman et al., 2022). The elderly are more susceptible to emotional manipulation of information or using provocative titles. In addition, the elderly in Indonesia are often the target of hoaxes with health or political themes, the impact of which can affect their decision-making in daily life (Mikhael, 2022; Rakhmawati et al., 2022; Suyanto et al., 2018).

Consuming hoaxes can have a significant impact, both individually and socially (Sopani, 2022). Individuals who believe in hoaxes can make the wrong decisions, experience anxiety, and feel deceived by the information they receive,

which can ultimately have a negative effect on their well-being (Madanih & Purnamasari, 2021). Seniors, as a vulnerable group to hoaxes, often experience greater impacts, such as increased stress or anxiety due to misinformation, which can affect their mental well-being (Faridi & Shaheen, 2024).

A study shows that the elderly with good digital literacy tend to be more independent in using technology for daily needs, such as seeking health information, maintaining communication with family, and reducing the risk of social isolation (Suyanto et al., 2018). Legally, the spread of hoaxes in Indonesia can be subject to criminal sanctions by the Electronic Information and Transaction Law (ITE), which aims to provide a deterrent effect for perpetrators (Athaillah et al., 2020; Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika, 2024). However, preventive efforts through digital literacy education are a more effective step in mitigating the spread of hoaxes, especially among the elderly.

The elderly are often a vulnerable group to hoaxes for several reasons. Seniors tend to trust the information they receive without further verification, especially if the information comes from sources that they consider trustworthy and familiar to them, such as family, friends, or social organizations they belong to (Rahayu et al., 2022). In this condition, a special educational agenda for the elderly is needed on how to filter and respond to digital information. This education not only helps the elderly understand how to verify information but also encourages them to be wiser in using technology. One of the initiatives that should be appreciated is the Elderly School program managed by the Elderly-Friendly Indonesia institution (Widyaningsih et al., 2022).

To support the success of this education, a participation-based approach is used as the main method. This approach involves participants actively in the learning process, by providing a space for them to share personal experiences, discuss real-life cases, and practice technology first-hand (Nurhidayat et al., 2022). This method is effective in improving digital literacy, as it suits the learning preferences of the elderly who tend to prefer practical and interactive experiences to the more theoretical one-way lecture format (Oktalya et al., 2020). Through these efforts, it is hoped that the elderly can gain a better ability to filter and respond to digital information wisely so that they can avoid the negative impact caused by the spread of hoaxes and false information (Guruh et al., 2020; Oktalya et al., 2020; Setiawan et al., 2023; Wicaksono & Kuswanti, 2022).

In the last three years, community service programs related to digital literacy for the elderly are still limited to the traditional top-down approach, where instructors often become learning centers without actively involving the elderly (Irawan et al., 2022). Most programs only focus on the introduction of basic technologies, such as the use of electronic devices and social media, without considering the specific needs of the elderly in utilizing technology practically and

sustainably (Emilia, 2023), (Faridi, 2024). In addition, community service that uses a participation-based approach, in which the elderly are involved as active partners in the learning process, has not been widely implemented. In the context of the Bekasi School for the Elderly, there is no service program specifically designed to improve digital literacy by integrating participatory methods that are by the local characteristics and needs of the elderly community in the region.

This service presents a participation-based approach as an innovation in improving the digital literacy of the elderly at the Bekasi Elderly School. This approach places the elderly as active partners who not only receive information, but also contribute to designing, implementing, and evaluating learning programs. Thus, this Community Service activity aims to increase the capacity of the elderly to process and respond to digital information, especially in the face of the rise of fake news or hoaxes. This education will be part of the agenda of the Elderly School in Jatisampurna Village, Bekasi City. Through this program, it is hoped that the elderly can improve their digital literacy skills so that they can navigate in the digital information environment wisely and avoid the danger of fake news or hoaxes.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The implementation method in this service activity is designed to achieve educational goals for the elderly regarding digital literacy and hoax prevention. The implementation time of PKM starts from September 2024 to November 2024. This PKM activity targets a minimum of 50 elderly participants from the Jatisampurna Village Elderly School, Bekasi City. The selection criteria for participants include a minimum age of 50 years, diverse educational backgrounds without requiring previous technological experience, and motivation to improve digital literacy. This approach ensures representation of different groups of seniors so that the program can provide inclusive benefits.

A participation-based approach is used to encourage the active involvement of participants in the learning process. In this approach, participants will engage directly by sharing personal experiences, discussing relevant case studies, and practicing the use of technology related to digital literacy and hoax prevention. This approach allows participants to not only learn theoretically but also feel more confident in practicing new skills. The following Figure 1 explains the flow of PKM activities.

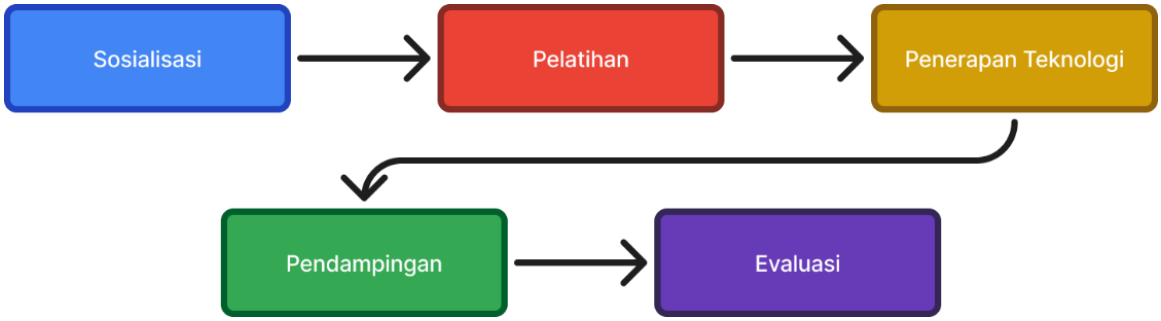


Figure 1. Stages of PKM Implementation Methods

The flow of implementation of this PKM activity consists of five interrelated stages, namely: 1) Socialization, starting with an initial meeting with the management of the Elderly School in Jatisampurna Village, Bekasi City. This meeting discussed the implementation steps, materials, and activity schedules that are integrated into the agenda of the Elderly School. 2) The training aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the use of digital devices, how to filter information, and recognize hoaxes. The session involves hands-on demonstrations to make it easier for participants to understand the practical steps. 3) Application of Technology. At this stage, the elderly practice new skills using apps like Google and YouTube to search for reliable information. Participants were also taught to verify information received from social media. 4) Assistance to help the elderly who still have difficulty using technology. A question and answer session was held to answer the participants' confusion and provide immediate solutions. 5) Evaluation. At this stage, the elderly will fill out a questionnaire to provide feedback related to the understanding of the material, the relevance of the activity, and the experience during the program.

Questionnaires are used as an evaluation tool because of their ease of implementation and ability to collect quantitative and qualitative data effectively. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire is ensured through trials on small groups before the program takes place to ensure that the questions are in accordance with the evaluation objectives. In addition, the impact of the program was measured by comparing pre-test and post-test results using a Likert scale of 1–5, in which participants assessed their level of understanding and confidence before and after training. This data is used to assess the effectiveness of the program as well as to develop recommendations for future program development.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Community Service Program (PKM) was attended by 50 elderly participants from the Jatisampurna Village Elderly School, Bekasi City. The participants consisted of elderly people over 50 years old, with diverse backgrounds, but had high enthusiasm to learn digital literacy and how to filter

information. The activity took place according to plan, including training stages, technology application, and mentoring sessions.

At the training stage, participants received an interactive presentation of material that included the definition of hoaxes, examples of hoaxes that are widely circulated on social media, and the negative impact of the spread of hoaxes depicted in Figure 2. The material also includes how to recognize the characteristics of hoaxes, such as provocative titles, excessive use of exclamation marks, and unclear sources of information. In addition, participants were taught how to verify information ranging from asking children and grandchildren to using the Google Fact Check and Turn Back Hoax sites. The method of delivering material using real case examples and a direct approach makes it easier for participants to understand the topic presented.

Figure 2. Material Explanation

Then followed by a question and answer session became an important moment in this activity, where participants shared personal experiences that enriched the discussion and provided additional learning for all who attended which is documented in Figure 3. One example of an interesting question came from Participant A, who was worried about the invitation received via WhatsApp. Participant A is confused about distinguishing between the original invitation and which could be a security threat. In this discussion, participants were directed to check the authenticity of the invitation by contacting the sender or related parties directly to ensure the information.

Figure 3. Question and Answer Activities from Participants to Speakers

Another question came from participant B, who often received calls from unknown people claiming to be from the police station. Participant B felt confused and scared because he did not know how to confirm the correctness of the caller's identity. In this case, practical solutions are provided, such as asking the caller to provide specific information that can be verified, as well as directly contacting the official police station to ensure the validity of the information.

In addition, participant C asked questions about WhatsApp messages from banks containing links. This participant wanted to know how to distinguish official messages from banks from messages that had the potential to be fraudulent. In this regard, simple instructions are given, such as checking the bank's official number, not clicking on suspicious links, and directly contacting the bank's customer service for verification.


Figure 4. Closing of Service Activities

After the question and answer process was completed, the last activity was the closing with a ceremonial photo with the participants depicted in figure 4. Overall, this activity not only provided new knowledge for the participants but also built their confidence in dealing with digital information. Interactive discussions and solutions provided during the Q&A session helped the elderly feel better prepared to practice their new skills in filtering information and preventing the spread of hoaxes. This shows that this PKM activity has succeeded in achieving its goal, which is to increase digital literacy and provide education on how to respond to information in the digital era.

The results of the digital literacy evaluation of participants before and after the training are shown in the following graph. The evaluation was conducted using a Likert scale of 1–5, with 1 indicating "not confident at all" and 5 indicating "very confident."

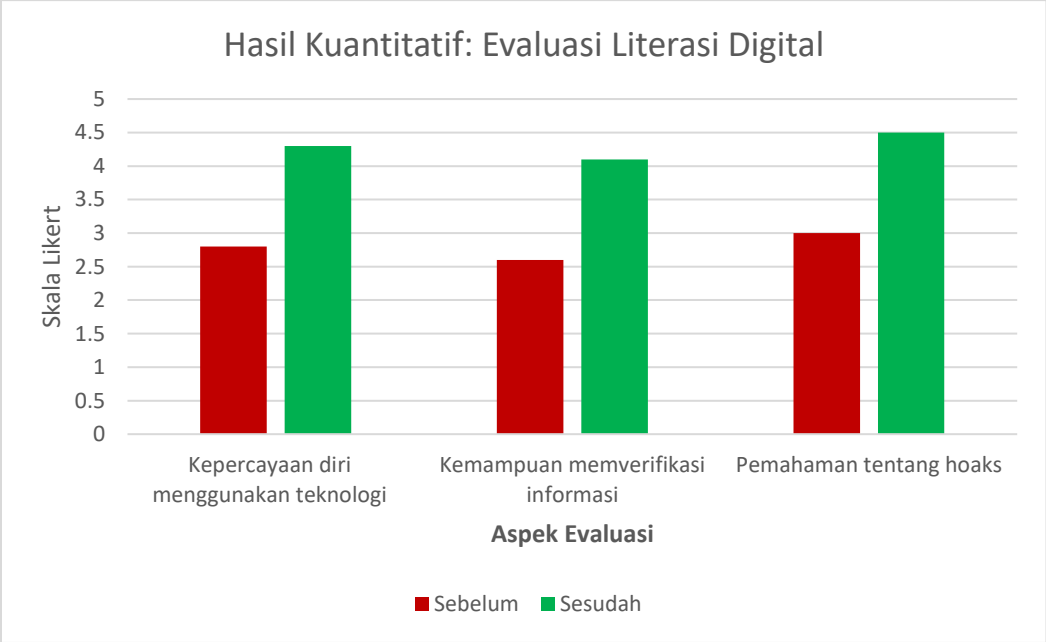


Figure 5. Quantitative Results on Digital Literacy Evaluation.

The results of the evaluation showed a significant improvement in the participants' digital literacy after participating in the training. Figure 5 shows that participants' confidence in using digital technology increased by 53%, from an average initial score of 2.8 before the training to 4.3 after the training. In addition, participants' ability to verify digital information increased by 58%, with an average initial score of 2.6 which increased to 4.1. Participants' understanding of hoaxes also increased by 50%, from an average score of 3.0 before the training to 4.5 after the training.

The success of this activity was also evaluated through a questionnaire filled out by all participants at the end of the program. The questionnaire consisted of three questions that included participants' responses to the material presentation

session, information verification practice session, and question and answer session. Based on the results of the evaluation, as many as 80% of the participants felt very satisfied with the material presentation session, 70% felt very satisfied with the information verification practice session, and 76% felt very satisfied with the question and answer session. The following table 1 summarizes the evaluation results from the questionnaire.

Table 1. Results of Activity Evaluation from the Questionnaire

| No | Evaluation Questions | Highly satisfied | Satisfied | Quite satisfied | Dissatisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Material Presentation Session | 80% | 16% | 4% | 0% |
| 2 | Information Verification Practice Session | 70% | 24% | 6% | 0% |
| 3 | Q&A Session | 76% | 20% | 4% | 0% |

These results support the literature that states that participation-based approaches are effective in improving digital literacy, especially in adult groups (Faridi & Shaheen, 2024). Direct interaction through discussions, case studies, and technology practices provides a relevant and applicative learning experience for the elderly (Nisa, 2023). This method allows participants to understand the material better and feel confident in applying the knowledge gained (Adiva, 2023).

Overall, the success of this program indicates that a comprehensive, interactive, and tailored educational approach to the needs of the elderly is key in improving their digital literacy (Susilawaty, 2023). This program has potential long-term impacts, such as improving the mental well-being of the elderly through reducing stress due to hoaxes and increasing independence in using digital technology (Wardiani, 2023). For replication in other regions, it is recommended to adapt the material to local needs and strengthen mentoring sessions for participants with low levels of digital literacy.

The digital literacy improvement program for the elderly through a participation-based approach, as carried out at the Bekasi Elderly School, is a form of community service that is very relevant in the digital era. Digital literacy is no longer just an additional skill, but an essential necessity for all age groups, including the elderly (Parani, 2023). In this context, programs that focus on seniors present unique challenges, given that most of them have physical, cognitive, or psychological limitations that affect their ability to adopt technology (Pradana, 2023). Therefore, a participation-based approach is a strategic and effective strategy to overcome these various obstacles.

The participation-based approach places the elderly not only as beneficiaries, but also as active subjects in the learning process (Rayani, 2020). The elderly are invited to share their life experiences, convey their specific needs, and be directly involved in designing learning activities. This approach is in line with the andragogi learning theory which emphasizes the importance of involving adults in determining their learning needs (Kurniati, 2022). In the context of digital literacy,

this participation allows the elderly to learn to use technology devices with contexts relevant to their daily lives, such as accessing digital health services, communicating with families through messaging applications, and looking for important information that can improve their quality of life (Roy, 2019).

The results of this program show a significant impact. Elderly people who initially feel anxious or unconfident in using technology become more skilled and independent. They are not only able to operate digital devices, but also understand how to utilize technology safely and responsibly. Positive psychological impacts, such as increased self-confidence and reduced social isolation, are also a plus of the program. Seniors who are more digitally connected feel more inclusive in an increasingly digitalized society.

The participation-based approach in this program has great potential to be further developed. One aspect that can be improved is the application of learning methods that are more adaptive to the needs of the elderly individuals. For example, the development of learning modules with a more elderly-friendly interface, the use of simple language, and examples of applications that are relevant to daily life (Daryanto, 2023). In addition, it is important to ensure the sustainability of the program's impact through follow-up mentoring, such as the establishment of digital discussion groups involving participants or collaboration with local communities to support the sustainable use of technology (Sari, 2022).

In addition, long-term evaluation of program results is also very necessary. Further service can be carried out to measure the extent to which the digital literacy that the elderly have acquired has an impact on their quality of life, such as in terms of access to information, reducing loneliness, or even increasing financial independence through the use of technology. This evaluation can also provide insight into what challenges are still faced by the elderly in using technology so that it can be anticipated in similar programs in the future.

Overall, this program reflects strategic and inclusive community service practices in responding to the challenges of digital transformation. The participation-based approach not only accelerates the process of technology adaptation by the elderly but also provides a broad social impact by increasing digital inclusivity. With continuous development and cross-sector collaboration, this kind of program can be an inspirational model for other digital literacy initiatives in various regions in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This Community Service Program has been successfully implemented based on the results of a questionnaire of 95%, showing that this program is running very well and providing significant benefits. As part of the purpose of service, this program is designed to provide applicable education to the elderly in using digital technology wisely and protecting themselves from hoaxes. Seniors who participated

in this activity felt better prepared to face the challenges of the digital era with relevant skills and deep understanding.

This activity improves digital literacy skills and encourages the elderly to be more critical in responding to the information they receive. This program is a strong basis for the development of similar activities in the future. It is recommended that this program be replicated in other regions by adjusting local needs and involving more elderly so that the benefits can be widely felt.

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