

# Digital Literacy; Ethics in Whatsapp Consumption

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## Abstract

The media has the ability to make a message as a reality, this is the expression of Walter Lippman that we can feel together today. Ironically, without understanding the meaning of the message, the information directly forwarded to other parties. Messages, especially through whatsapp groups (WAG), are unnoticed and so quickly spread. The idea of this writing is based on the results of the 2018's research study which implies that technological understanding, especially for educators, is still at the surface stage, meaning that they have not yet realized the enormous consequences of sharing the news they have received, without being preceded by processing the message received. technological progress always has positive and negative consequences depending on how to interpret it, one of which is the disclosure of information that can be seen from both sides. Technological progress always has positive and negative consequences depending on how to interpret it, one of which is the disclosure of information that can be seen from both sides. The existence of any educator from both the formal and informal sides has a lot of influence on students' understanding of social media. Utilization of technology will make all think creatively, coupled with an understanding of ethics in communicating through social media, making digital technology increasingly necessary. By using the basic theory of computer mediated communication (CMC), media literacy, hyper-personal communication, and ethics of communication, this article will discuss the importance of digital literacy for the community, especially educators through a conceptual approach, so with a good understanding of media especially communication ethics, it will be able to utilizing the latest technology for useful things.

Key words: Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), digital and media literacy, Hyper-personal Communication, and Communication ethics

## Abstrak

Walter Lipman mengatakan bahwa media mempunyai kemampuan untuk membuat pesan sebagaimana relaitas yang ada. Sehingga kemajuan teknologi komunikasi, khususnya WhatsApp (WA) terkadang membuat suatu pesan yang diterima tanpa dipahami maknanya langsung dibagikan ke pihak lain. Pesan melalui WA grups sangat cepat tersebar. Didasarkan pada hasil penelitian tahun 2018 yang menyatakan bahwa masih diperlukannya literasi media, dikarenakan banyak pendidik khususnya Guru yang belum memahami apa dan bagaimana WA itu. Kemajuan teknologi selalu emmberikan dua sisi efek yaitu positif dan negative tergantung bagaimana kita memanfaatkannya. Keberadaan pendidik baik formal maupun informal sangat berpengaruh terhadap kemampuan anak didik memahami media social. Pemanfaatan teknologi dibarengi dengan pemahaman etika komunikasi membuat teknologi semakin dirasakan keberadaannya. Dengan menggunakan konsep dari computer-mediated-communication (CMC), literasi media, komunikasi hyper-personal dan etika komunikasi maka artikel ini membahas pentingnya etika komunikasi bagi suatu masyarakat khususnya pendidik dalam berinteraksi melalui berbagai media khususnya WA. Hal ini akan membuat teknologi komunikasi dalam hal WA menjadi bermanfaat.

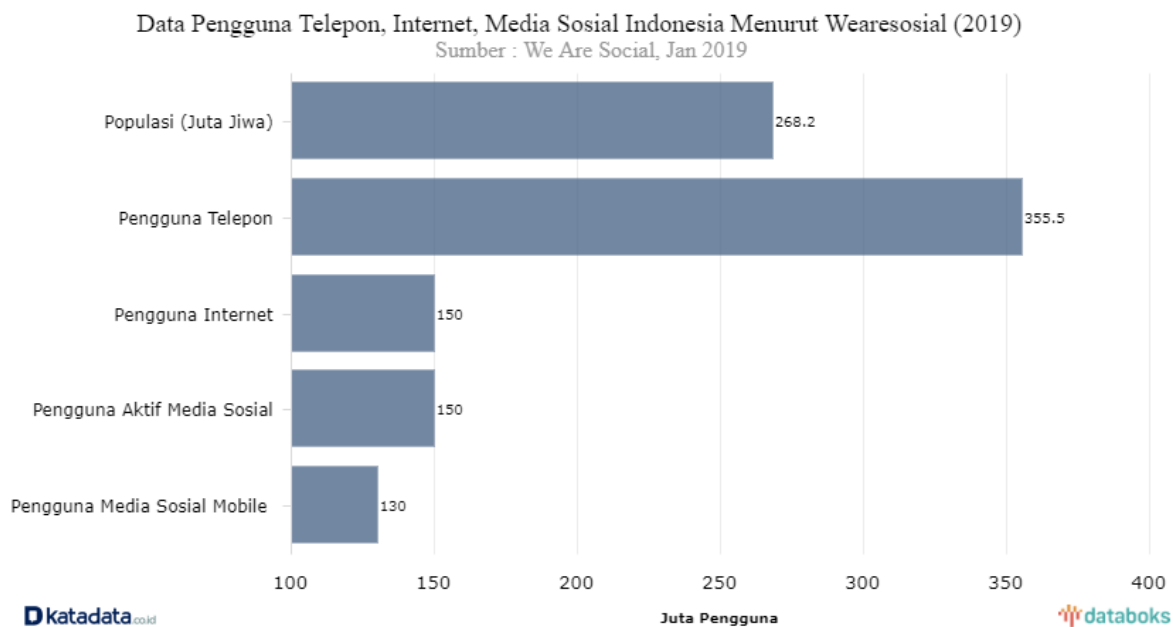
## INTRODUCTION

*They eat your data, they disrupt your sleep, and they interrupt sacred moments of your life. (Amy Purdan)*

WhatsApp or WA is almost known and used by everyone in the world. But not all users understand what and how WA is, what is important can be used to send messages, photos and videos and more importantly at no cost when we are in a place with wifi channels .What's wrong with WA. Actually there is nothing wrong with the WA application, the problem is the use of WA itself. Many conflicts that arise due to WA. But on the other hand there are also many good things that are caused by WA, therefore WA or technological advances anywhere must produce two sides, positive and negative. Based on data taken from Statista, WA is accessed by 1.6 billion users in the world, while in Indonesia WA is used by 200 million active users per month (Most Popular Message Sending Application as of April 2019, Source: Statista, April 2019). Questions that actually arise is what is WA ? WA which was first discovered by Brian Acton and Jan Koum, WA is an instant messaging platform that follows iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, Windows Phone and Nokia smartphone users to send or exchange text, images, videos and audio messages without having to be charged. (<https://searchmobilecomputing.techtarget.com/definition/WhatsApp>).

How about in Indonesia?

After Youtube WA position in second rank for the most active social media in Indonesia, with 150 million users or 56% of the total population of Indonesia. And from a survey conducted by Katadata 2019 , it shows that the Indonesian population uses an average of 3 hours 26 minutes each day. However, from a survey conducted by Hootsuite, 2019 revealed that 83% of Indonesia's population actively uses social media, this shows there are 124 million internet users via WA through their gadgets



Source : <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2019/02/08/berapa-pengguna-media-sosial-indonesia>

From some of the data above illustrates how WA has controlled most of our society. However, some conflicts that occur in Indonesia are also caused by the contents of messages sent WA by irresponsible people. Therefore through this simple article will discuss how to use the WA application properly in

order to provide maximum benefits for other parties. This article is the result of analysis through several theories including computer mediated communication, digital literacy, hyper-personal communication and communication ethics.

## **THEORITICAL CONCEPTS**

### **Computer Mediated Communication**

When we talk about WA, we also talk about how communication takes place through the media. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) can simply be interpreted as a place to communicate using a computer. So communicate as a human being but through the media. This is consistent with what was said by Sussan Hering (1996) in Thurlow, 2007.

*CMC is communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers.*

Although CMC has major technological implications, in practice CMC also pays special attention to interpersonal communication between people, via the internet and the web. When seen from the 3 words of CMC, computer, mediated and communication, it is clear we must look at the three words, for example when talking about communication, it cannot be separated from the concept of communication in general. One simple concept that cannot be abandoned in communication is the existence of a source, message and receiver

So discussing CMC basically still discussing communication between people. Human communication is more considered, because it is dynamic. From the technology side of the message delivered to the recipient, that's all. But in terms of communication messages sent, received and processed through the encoding and decode process that is tailored to the existing context, so it is contextual. Then from the communication side it must be seen that communication is transactional, meaning that in the communication process there are transactions like buying and selling. If prices match, the transaction occurs. Now the price suitability is determined by many factors, between the social, economic, environmental background and experience of each individual involved in the communication process, and negotiations occur.

Communication is always intentional, for example, want to find information, provide knowledge, or influence to change someone's behavior, therefore communicating is a transaction. The results of Sedyaningsih's research, (2010), said that communicating through computers is decontextual in nature, meaning that it does not include social or non-verbal signs such as voice intonation, body movements, closeness or body orientation

What about mediated concepts? Mediated is the media used to deliver the message conveyed. This media can be very diverse in print, electronic and social media. Media communication or interaction through the media is communication that uses technology to block the message, meaning there is a media or so-called channel.

The channel itself can be social, psychological and cultural. By Thurlow, (2007) it is said that the channel in communication contains several factors, namely psychology, where in communication there are perceptual factors, mental maps, and prototypes, then Social such as relationships, stereotypes, and individual experiences and the last which contains mystics, ideologies and society in general, called Cultural. Whereas the third concept is computers, in communication through the most technical computer media factors, although they cannot leave the inherent social factors, but in this article computers are seen more as technological tools that are always developing and facilitating humans

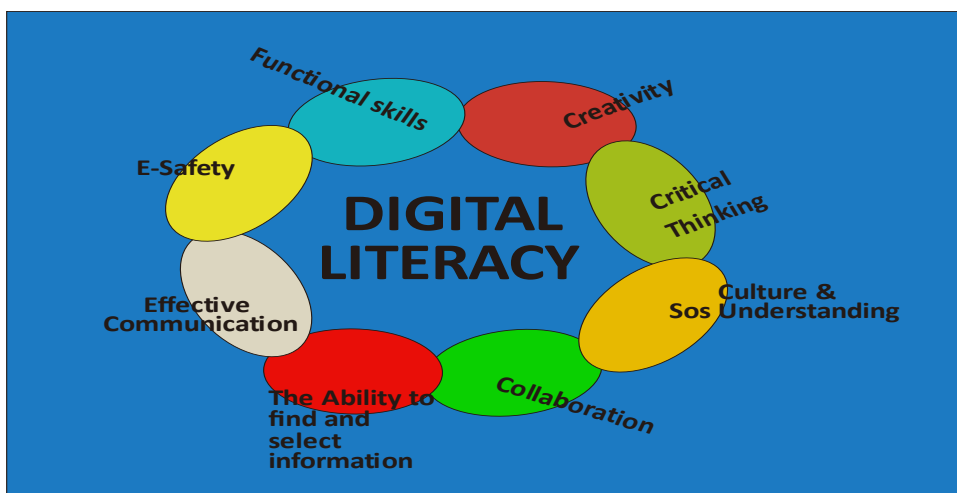
### **Digital Literacy**

*Digital Literacy is a skill required in the Industrial 4.0 era (Olorundare, 2018)*

From the data presented by Hootsuite 2019, it appears that social media users in Indonesia are so high when compared to the existing population. From the picture above it can be seen that the total population

of Indonesia is 268.2 million while those who use the media. Especially 355 million mobile phones, this shows that many of us have more than 1 media devices. Besides that, social media users are already more than 50%. This shows that social media activity is so high. On the other hand, when viewed from the profile of social media users, it is shown that the highest users in the age range of 18-34 years, this illustrates that young people dominate the use of mobile devices. The question that arises has the media users are literate ? This is a challenge in technological development. The results of research conducted by Sedyaningsih, 2018 of educators, showed that all teachers who were respondents represented a small part of Indonesia, utilizing mobile devices as a means of communication. When asked if they understand how the effects of using mobile devices are, they only know the extent of communication media, what are the consequences of communicating, they don't think about it. This gives us an illustration that teachers as educators who are expected to be able to transform their knowledge to us all do not understand well the effects of the use of media, especially mobile devices. If you look at the role of technology said by Wanda J. Orlikowski (2012) from the side of Sociomateriality, where humans and communication technology are integrated, interact with each other. Humans adjust to the environment including ICT, mind change occurs (Susan Grenfields, 2015) for the native digital generation, also demands for change for the digital immigrant generation

In CMC, we also know the Social Presence Theory which by Williams, and Christie (1976), said as, "the degree of salience, meaning the degree of importance where interaction occurs." Whereas Gunawardena (1995) states, the degree to which people receive "real person "in media communication. The presence of this theory is expected to replace or maximize the presence of several factors, namely Intimacy, Immediacy, Non-Verbal Communication, Efficiency, Classification, FtF Interaction and C-M-C Interaction. One form of CMC is the over the top (OTT) service process for communicating in real time such as: WhatsApp, Line, etc. OTT Media, to access media content such as You Tube, Netflix, Sound Cloud etc. OTT Commerce, for commercial purposes such as Pay Pal, Trivago, Kaskus, Airbnb, etc. OTT Social Media, to socialize in cyberspace such as Face Book, Twitter, Instagram etc. OTT information aggregator for information services, such as Google Search, Google Map, Mozilla Fire Fox, Waze Google Earth, Microsoft Academia etc. The rise of Over The Top (OTT) phenomenon makes several characters, namely digital life, connectivity, *economy sharing*, *economy access* and able to change business models. *The World is flat, Mass Self Communication, The Decline of Mass Media*. with a marked presence *Convergence, User Centered, Technical Connectivity = Social Connectivity = Cultural Connectivity, The Medium is The Message, Liberalism, Democracy, Diversity, Transparency, Economy Sharing, Mass Self Communication.*(Subiyakto, 2016). From the results of 2018 Sedyaningsih's research on teachers in Indonesia who are also Open University students, shows the need for improved media literacy. From this media literacy there are several factors that must also be considered, namely, creativity, critical thinking, culture and social understanding, collaboration, the ability to find and select information, effective communication, E-safety and functional skills. (Olorundare, 2018). These requirements are a challenge for Indonesia, where users of mobile devices are more than half the population, do they understand digital media well?



Source : Olorundare, 2018

### **Hyper-Personal Communication**

The process of media communication or known as mediated communication is a form of hyper-personal communication that is the result of interpersonal communication processes, where the source has the ability to develop what is desired starting from presenting, editing and sending it wherever he wants through social media .(Joinson,2004 in Usita,2010). In the process of media communication, usually few know what are the advantages and disadvantages of the media used, what is important is how to connect with other parties or can interact with someone he wants. (O'Keefe, 2002). This is clarified by Scheufefe and Lawenstein that developing an understanding of information technology requires a significant effort in the order that people can understand it well, because if not, there will be new information disintegration. (Scheufefe & Lewenstain, 2005). Relationships that occur in interaction through social media are very dependent on the expectations of the sender of the message. Likewise, WA can play a personal or mass-personal role. This form of communication when viewed from the side of the concept of communication, it can be influenced by a number of basic concepts namely : **Social Presence Theory**, Degree to which we as individuals perceive another as a real person and any interaction between the two as a relationship, different media convey different degrees of perceived substance to an interaction. The Internet is not a FtF replacement but a channel. People prefer FtF to meet most communication needs. **Social Context Cues Theory**, Social context cues are indicators of appropriate behavior, include geographic, organizational, and situational variables. Lack of social cues affects on the nature of human behavior in mediated contexts (Wood and Smith, 2005). **Cuelessness Model**, Absence of all nonverbal cues and identity markers (e.g., status, occupational role). Psychological distance increases resulting in more impersonal communication. (Thurlow, Lengel, and Tomic, 2007). **Media Richness Model**, Richness determined as ability to transmit multiple cues, ability to give immediate feedback, ability to support the use of natural or conversational language, it is personal focus (Thurlow, 2007), **Reduce Social Clue**, Reduced social cues makes interactions between people much more difficult to manage. Conversation becomes less fluid, less easily regulated and more effortful (Thurlow , 2005), CMC undermines social norms and give an influences

In education, the constructivist approach becomes the main one, meaning that everyone is given the opportunity to learn based on their experience and knowledge. Constructivists assume that humans build their knowledge and meaning based on their experience. Besides this approach always includes the context and respect for "self" someone from the side of his life as individuals and social creatures

### **Communication Ethics**

Before discussing how the ethics of communication with WA users in Indonesia, it should be understood together what communication and communication etiquette, so that we have a common understanding. Starting the discussion on the concept of communication, take the concept of Mass Personal Communication Media (MPCM) revealed by O 'Sullivan, 2017 which identifies the subjective perception of the communicator and also the subjective justification of the recipient based on his personal traits. MPCM provides a continuum between personal and personal which is a combination of public communication and personal communication in the same realm that is public and personal. MPCM emphasizes not on understanding the message itself but how the mass message is interpreted. This concept focuses on how the recipient understands the contents of a message. So more see the communicator or sender anticipating messages in interaction. So it can be said that the concept of O 'Sullivan sees a personal perspective in the process of interaction through social media that is also mass, so there is mass-personal space.

Communication as is known to have several forms, there is interpersonal communication, where there is interaction between one another face to face, group communication, communication that occurs in a group and mass communication, namely communication that occurs through mass media, both print and electronic. With the advancement of technology interaction occurs through a variety of media, especially social media that can be personal and also impersonal, so it is said to be intermediated personal communication. Basically the process of interaction between humans is based on interpersonal

communication, where by Burleson it is said that the characteristics of interpersonal communication are characterized as "communicative Relationship", where interaction is joint action based on shared awareness that interactions between senders and receivers are taking place.

On the basis that the sender has the intention to convey a meaningful message to the receiver, and the receiver gives an interpretation and accepts the presence or expression of the sender and understands the message conveyed. This interaction occurs is the basis of interpersonal communication. The communication process converges and has always been a part of the culture, because communication must occur within a culture. Any sign, symbol and also codes that is used to provide restrictions or specific shows that there is a group of communicating in it. Meaning formed adjust by culture, and culture is transmitted over the process called socialization through the process of enculturation. All process has occurred through communication can be interpersonal communication or impersonal communication including those communication through printed media and electronic. To initiate discussion about the communication process we look back on the Harold D Lasswell model who began used in 1948 to propaganda namely 4w + 1h ( the who says what, in which channel, to whom and with what effect. Although formulations Lasswell is approach to mass communication but can used in the process interpersonal communication . Who are in fact that is considered who? What can affect? Thus a communicator can be used as role models, and the other considered significant in the processes of communication.( Hill Anne, James Watson, 2007). Claude Shanon and Weaver posited a linear model of communication consisting of source, receiver, a message, transmitter and purpose, where is must be considered as any noise.

What about Communication Ethics?

We often hear morals and ethics. In everyday life we often hear these terms, but sometimes they are not well understood. Moral is the ability to understand the difference between right and wrong, while ethics is the standard of behavior and moral rules in all situations. So ethics is more about the role of conduct. Ethics are based on religious, philosophical and cultural ideals. There are some basics in seeing an ethic, namely from Socrates, Thomas Hobes and John Locke who believe that in social contract theory, people in a society have an unwritten agreement between members of the community. (Straubhaar, 2012) A simple example when we have to respect older people. What about ethics in the media? At least there are things that must be considered by a media, whatever the form of the media, namely accuracy, what is conveyed must be accurate and can really be justified. It should be based on data from credible and valid sources. Second, fairness means that there is a balance in everything that is delivered. News sources must think about the consequences of the message delivered must be checked and rechecked, meaning that both sides must be opinion, and third is confidentiality meaning that if there is information that is confidential then it should not be presented in public spaces. Those three things become the main grip for a media or people working in the media world. All three can also be applied to WA users

As a branch of philosophy, etiquette is related to right or wrong which is closely related to context. In interacting, it is very important to understand the ethics of communication, because everyone has different ways of interacting. Communication and ethics are inherent in human life, every time we interact both with purpose and without purpose. There is no form of communication that can be separated from ethics. Thus, ethical questions infuse all areas of the discipline of communication, including rhetoric, media studies, intercultural/international communication, relational and organization communication, and all other interactions of the discipline. Some scholars specialize in communication ethics as a subfield of communication studies with applications to all aspects of the field, while others work more theoretically in search of philosophical inquiry and understanding. There are things that are often forgotten but actually important is the etiquette relating to how we value other parties in communicating through WA, and this etiquette is a challenge in itself. Building healthy relationships is a very basic thing in human life

## **DISCUSSION**

The ethics of communication, especially through WA, is inseparable from problems or social processes, Maclver, said that social processes are behavioral patterns in which social relations between group members produce distinctive characteristics. These special characteristics can be changes in conditions up or down, developing or backward, disintegration or integration. In addition, Ginsbers defines social processes as ways of interaction carried out by individuals or groups, including in building cooperation, conflict, differentiation, integration, development, and loss of social relations. And Gillin, with social processes, we intend to describe ways of interacting that we can observe when individuals or groups meet and create relationships or what happens when change disrupts previous life patterns (Source: sociological.com/process-social). From some restrictions on social processes it can be concluded that social processes are interactions between individuals in a particular area, where interaction always occurs through various communication media, one of which is through WA. WhatsApp (WA) is a platform used to send messages and pictures to one another without provide extra payment. Launched in 2009, it has become a very fast-growing platform and is becoming very popular and updated all the time. (Barbosa, 2019). Nadeem Unuth, 2019 says that WA is

*the enormously popular messaging and Voice over IP service owned by Facebook, allows users to send text messages, voice calls, recorded voice messages, video calls, images, documents, and user location.*

And more than 1 billion people from 180 countries use WA to greet one another. Currently WA users can send messages, pictures, sounds, videos to individuals or groups, even with WA we can create a group of approximately 100 people. Sevitt, 2017 said that the biggest WA users in the world are India and Indonesia. There are some things that should be owned by us who use WA, this is called the golden rules taken from <https://www.webafrica.co.za/blog/general-knowledge/golden-rules-whatsapp-groups/> which consists of :

- Always keep to the purpose of the group. Don't share irrelevant messages about other topics.
- Do not spam the group. If you would like a group to share memes, adverts or deals with then set one up for that exact purpose and invite others to join.
- Don't be offended if others leave. Not everyone wants the same information.
- Do politely excuse yourself before you leave a group.
- Post your message in one single chunk of text, don't post every word or sentence in a new message.
- Don't create huge groups.
- Don't create groups with minors who don't know each other – no parent wants their kids talking to strangers.
- Do not have one-on-one conversations in the group. Switch to private messages.
- Do not post in any group between 21:00 and 07:00 unless it is an all-out emergency.
- If a message asks for a positive response like an RSVP, don't reply in the negative.
- If someone asks a question and you don't know the answer don't respond with "I don't know". Just wait for someone who knows the answer to reply.
- Please don't send in a hundred "thank you" messages. If you feel gratitude towards someone – tell them in a private message.
- If someone asks a question of a personal nature (like asking for advice) don't respond if someone else has already answered, or else respond to the person directly in a private message.
- The group is not a political platform (unless you have specifically set it up for this purpose) No arguing, no heated opinions, no fear mongering, no hyped up drama, no fake news. Check your sources before you share.
- Never EVER use a group to berate someone else or air grievances. If you have an issue address it one on one with the relevant person.
- Don't add random people to a close-knit group.
- Always ask someone if you may add them before you add them.(Ami Purdan, 2018)

The rules in this WA group also apply to individuals, reminding us how to interact through WA. Very often we don't respond to the message we receive. This is less ethical, because interaction through WA is actually the same as face-to-face communication, so what happens if you greet someone and the

person you are calling doesn't respond to, it certainly isn't fun and that's what happens with interaction through WA. The etiquette principle is the same, it's just separated by distance and done through the media. Therefore when interacting through WA, several questions must be considered before responding or sharing messages received or to be sent, first is the message relevant to the recipient, second is it necessary and useful and the third is this the right time to send it?

Interaction via WA, although it can be read at any time and we do not deal directly with other parties, must still consider the time of sending the message. As some theoretical concepts that underlie the writing of this article that communication through WA still seems to present us in interacting, understanding procedures or ethics to communicate well, because even though only through emoticons or fixed emoticons it all gives different meanings. For example when we give emoticons to our message through many question mark symbols, it will give a different meaning if we send a question mark symbol with just one letter. These things must be understood by all of us that communicating through digital media, especially WA is not as simple as we communicate face to face. Because through WA we must have a good imagination to the social context of the recipient of the message

## **CONCLUSSION**

WA is a virtual individual or group platform for sharing information and supporting one another. This needs to get attention to use WA as a medium of interaction, especially if it's in a group or WhatsApp Group (WAG). We sometimes don't know very well the individuals in the WAG, so we can't see-in person-the other group members, they can behave however they want. However the ethics of communication should be understood, so we can respect each other, understand the other party especially when it is on the WAG

Obtaining proper treatment is a right and obligation for every citizen wherever you are, so that to keep this WA properly and properly utilized, the State must still be present in the face of technological advances. Do not let us be enslaved by technology. In the interest of the nation, the state must intervene to regulate the internet, consider digital restrictions, promote the use of digital enhancements to improve the quality of its human resources and develop and expand access to digital networks.

Especially for WA users, there are several things that must be understood

- Keep interactions or personal chats through private chat
- Don't start new topics on the WAG that are not important and unrelated to the people in the WAG
- Try to always reply to messages that are received no later than 48 hours, unless there are certain reasons
- Use emoticons to strengthen your message Reply to messages at a convenient time
- Avoid as much as possible to delete messages

With the large number of WA users it requires us to pay more attention to the effects caused by this WA. Technology always produces two positive and negative sides, all very dependent on the wearer. To avoid negative effects, an understanding of the effects of WA must be considered, including safe procedures and procedures, digital literated human resources through education that suits the needs of digital life

Government intervention is still needed through wise regulation, Education curriculum must be aligned with the development of digital life such as ethics, press law, media literacy, multimedia journalism, sociology of media, communication technology etc. On the other hand training, code of ethics and control of the media and the community must still be maintained

We can never prohibit or limit the use of technology. By understanding the technology itself and based on an understanding of communication ethics in interacting, WA is one of the media that can have a positive effect on the progress of this nation.



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