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Enhancing Legal Awareness among Rural Traders and Consumers through Socialization on Social Commerce

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ABSTRACT

Social commerce has grown rapidly and become a major platform for public transactions, including in rural areas. However, limited digital legal literacy exposes rural communities to risks such as fraud, product discrepancies, and misuse of personal data. This community service program aimed to strengthen the legal awareness of micro-business owners and consumers in Gunung Silanu Village, Jenepono Regency, particularly regarding their rights, obligations, and potential legal risks associated with digital transactions. The program employed interactive legal education, simulations of safe online transaction practices, the distribution of digital legal literacy modules, and the establishment of a village-based digital legal communication forum. The results indicated an improvement in participants' legal understanding, as reflected in higher post-test scores than pre-test scores. Participants also demonstrated increased awareness and a greater commitment to conducting safer online transactions in compliance with applicable laws. Overall, the program generated educational and preventive benefits and provides a replicable model for digital legal literacy initiatives in other rural communities.

Keywords: Social Commerce, Digital Legal Literacy, Consumer Protection, Community Service.

I. Introduction

The development of information technology has fundamentally transformed economic interactions. Rapid digital transformation has accelerated the shift from conventional transactions to electronic commerce (e-commerce), which is increasingly integrated with social media platforms. This emerging business model, known as social commerce, involves the buying and selling of goods and services through social media platforms that support marketing and transaction activities (Abbas & Ramadani). Social commerce combines social communication with economic transactions, offering convenience, low operating costs, and extensive marketing reach. According to a 2023 report by Google, Temasek, and Bain & Company, Indonesia had the largest digital economy in Southeast Asia, with digital transactions valued at USD 82 billion, of which 77% came from the e-commerce sector. Furthermore, DataReportal (2024) reported that 167 million Indonesians actively used social media, creating favorable conditions for the growth of this interaction-based trading

model. Unlike marketplace-based e-commerce, which generally provides structured consumer protection mechanisms, social commerce often operates informally and relies heavily on trust between sellers and buyers. This characteristic increases the risk of fraud, misinformation, and personal data misuse. Baghdadi (2013) argued that the informal nature of social commerce creates legal gaps that may expose consumers to harm, particularly because transactions may not involve escrow services or platform-based verification mechanisms.

In Indonesia, this phenomenon is reflected in the high incidence of online transaction fraud. The Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kemenkominfo) reported 486,000 online fraud cases between 2017 and 2022, with 83% reportedly involving transactions conducted through social media (Kemenkominfo, 2023). This report highlights the vulnerability of consumers engaging in social media transactions. Similarly, Huang and Benyoucef (2013) found that social media platforms tend to prioritize user engagement and communication over transaction security, potentially increasing the risk of information manipulation and identity fraud in social commerce. This issue has also emerged in South Sulawesi, where several reported cases illustrate the vulnerability of local communities to online transaction fraud. A resident, Muh. Nur Alam, reportedly lost millions of rupiah after purchasing a motorcycle through Facebook and WhatsApp from a fraudulent seller (DetikSulsel, 2024). The transaction was conducted without written documentation or verification of the seller's identity. In another case, the police arrested MRA (24) for allegedly defrauding hundreds of consumers through an online store operating on Instagram and Facebook (Terkini.id, 2024). The affected consumers reportedly did not receive the goods despite having paid in full. These cases illustrate several recurring problems: (1) informal transactions conducted through direct messages, (2) the absence of invoices or other legally relevant transaction records, (3) limited digital legal literacy, and (4) inadequate consumer protection mechanisms. These conditions highlight the need for legal education initiatives to improve public awareness and vigilance when conducting transactions through social media. Such initiatives are particularly important for rural communities, whose access to the internet and use of social media continue to expand, while their understanding of digital legal issues and consumer protection may remain limited. Strengthening digital legal literacy is therefore essential to help rural residents recognize potential legal risks, understand their rights and obligations, and conduct online transactions more safely and in accordance with applicable laws.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Legal Socialization and Legal Awareness

Legal socialization is the process of communicating legal information, values, and norms to the public to help individuals understand, internalize, and apply legal provisions in their daily lives. According to Friedman (1975), the effectiveness of law in society depends not only on the substance of the law and law enforcement institutions but also on the community's legal culture. Legal socialization serves as an important means of developing and strengthening this culture. Soekanto (1983) identified four indicators of legal awareness: legal knowledge, legal understanding, attitudes toward the law, and legal compliance behavior. These indicators can be strengthened through participatory and dialogical legal socialization that reflects the community's social context. Widodo and Sulistiyono (2020) found that legal socialization increased public knowledge by up to 72% and improved legal compliance behavior by 58% among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) following digital legal training. In contemporary legal practice, legal socialization extends beyond the dissemination of normative information to include legal empowerment. Golub (2010) explained that legal empowerment enhances the public's ability to understand their rights, resolve disputes, and prevent legal harm. This approach is particularly relevant to e-commerce, where individuals with limited legal knowledge may be more vulnerable to fraud and digital manipulation. Several empirical studies in Indonesia have also demonstrated the effectiveness of legal education in strengthening legal awareness among rural communities and micro-business operators. Kurniawan (2019), for example, found that consumer

protection education increased public understanding by 65%. Asriati (2024) demonstrated that education on electronic transactions and consumer protection encouraged greater caution when using digital financial services. Similarly, Tawil et al. (2023) found that a community-based participatory training approach could enhance the capacity of residents in Gunung Silanu Village to adopt new technologies. These findings suggest that legal socialization plays a strategic role in improving digital legal literacy, fostering a culture of legal compliance, and reducing the risks of violations and fraud associated with social media-based transactions.

2.2. Definition and Legal Aspects of E-Commerce

Electronic commerce (e-commerce) refers to the buying and selling of goods and services through electronic systems. Laudon and Traver (2022) define e-commerce as a commercial transaction process that uses internet technology to facilitate the exchange of goods, services, and information. In Indonesia, Government Regulation No. 80 of 2019 concerning Trading Through Electronic Systems regulates commercial transactions conducted through digital devices and internet networks. Law No. 1 of 2024, which amends Law No. 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions, provides the legal framework for electronic information, electronic documents, and electronic transactions. Electronic documents and contracts may serve as legally recognized evidence when they satisfy the applicable legal requirements. According to Susanto (2018), this development has transformed the evidentiary framework for transactions, which previously relied more heavily on physical documents. Furthermore, Law No. 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection establishes consumers' rights to receive accurate, clear, and honest information that is not misleading. In digital transactions, these rights extend to product descriptions, prices, business operators' identities, transaction terms, and return policies. Asriati (2024) emphasized that limited understanding of consumer rights can increase the public's vulnerability to fraud in electronic transactions. Therefore, e-commerce represents not merely a change in transaction methods but also a context in which comprehensive legal understanding is essential to protecting consumers from digital risks.

2.3. Theory, Definition, and Characteristics of Social Commerce

Social commerce is a business model that integrates social media interactions with commercial transactions. Huang and Benyoucef (2013) describe social commerce as an evolution of e-commerce that relies on social interactions, user recommendations, and community relationships to influence purchasing decisions. Unlike conventional e-commerce, which primarily emphasizes online transactions, social commerce places greater emphasis on the social interactions that shape consumer behavior. Several scholars have proposed complementary definitions of social commerce. Baghdadi (2013) describes it as the integration of e-commerce and social media, enabling businesses to use social networks to market and sell products. Similarly, Liang and Turban (2011) characterize social commerce as a form of community-based commerce that incorporates user-generated contributions, including reviews, recommendations, and discussions, into the transaction process. In the Indonesian regulatory context, Minister of Trade Regulation No. 31 of 2023 addresses social commerce as a form of social media service that facilitates the promotion or offering of goods and services. The regulation also establishes relevant requirements concerning business activities conducted through electronic systems. Trust and risk theory, as discussed by Gefen (2000), highlights the importance of trust in online transactions, where buyers may have limited opportunities to verify sellers and products directly. In social commerce, trust is often shaped by seller reputation, user reviews, and social interactions. Brodie et al. (2011) also emphasized the role of user engagement in shaping consumer behavior, suggesting that active interactions can influence purchasing decisions. According to Zhang and Benyoucef (2016), social commerce has six distinctive characteristics:

- a. User-generated content: Photos, testimonials, and reviews shared by users.
- b. Two-way communication: Direct interaction between sellers and buyers.

- c. Dependence on trust: Purchasing decisions influenced by seller reputation and perceived credibility.
- d. Informal transaction processes: Transactions that may occur through direct messages and without standardized documentation.
- e. Community-based decision-making: Purchasing decisions influenced by recommendations and social relationships.
- f. Potential fraud risks: Exposure to fraud and other risks when verification and consumer protection mechanisms are inadequate.

Research in Indonesia has also identified similar characteristics. Sapitri and Kurnia (2025) found that social commerce platforms, including TikTok Shop, may create competitive challenges and expose consumers to fraud risks when real-time interactions are not supported by adequate verification mechanisms. Understanding these characteristics is therefore essential for developing appropriate digital legal education strategies at the village level, particularly in Gunung Silanu Village. Such initiatives can help community members recognize potential risks, understand their legal rights and obligations, and adopt safer practices when conducting transactions through social media.

III. Research Method

The community service program employed a participatory, educational, and practice-oriented approach to enhance the understanding and legal awareness of residents in Gunung Silanu Village regarding electronic commerce transactions conducted through social media. The program consisted of three main stages: (1) preparation, (2) implementation, and (3) evaluation and follow-up. All stages were guided by the principles of community-based empowerment and andragogy, which position community members as active participants in the learning process. The program adopted a mixed-methods approach that integrated legal education, practical digital transaction simulations, and participatory evaluation through pre-tests and post-tests. The activities comprised four main components. First, interactive legal counseling was conducted through participatory presentations, discussions of real-life cases, and question-and-answer sessions to improve participants' legal knowledge. Second, simulations of safe digital transaction practices were provided to train participants in the use of digital invoices and transaction receipts, verification of seller and buyer identities, and appropriate complaint procedures. Third, mentoring activities and the establishment of a village-based digital communication forum were implemented through a WhatsApp group to facilitate continued learning, information sharing, and legal consultation. Fourth, participants' legal understanding was assessed using pre-tests and post-tests to evaluate changes in their knowledge and determine the effectiveness of the program.

IV. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the community service program conducted in Gunung Silanu Village, Jeneponto Regency, and discusses the findings in relation to relevant literature and theoretical frameworks. The analysis focuses on three main aspects: (1) improvements in the community's understanding of digital law; (2) participants' ability to apply safe electronic transaction practices; and (3) the establishment of a sustainable digital legal learning ecosystem at the village level.

4.1. Participant Profile and Initial Digital Legal Literacy

The program was attended by approximately 26 participants, including micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) owners, homemakers, members of the local youth organization (Karang Taruna), and village officials. All participants actively used social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok

for both buying and selling activities. The pre-test results revealed low levels of digital legal literacy among participants, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Initial Digital Legal Literacy Levels (Pre-Test Results)

Aspects of Understanding	Initial Understanding
Knowledge of consumer rights	18%
Understanding of the legal basis for electronic transactions	12%
Awareness of the risks associated with social media transactions	22%
Experience using digital invoices	10%
Understanding of safe electronic transaction practices	6%

The findings indicate that participants had limited digital legal literacy before the intervention, particularly regarding the legal framework governing electronic transactions and safe transaction practices. These findings are consistent with Asriati (2024), who reported that rural communities in South Sulawesi are vulnerable to digital crime because of limited understanding of legal regulations and electronic transaction mechanisms.

4.2. Results of Interactive Legal Socialization

Legal education was delivered through interactive presentations, case study discussions, and educational video screenings. Participants received information about the Electronic Information and Transactions Law, consumer protection, electronic contracts, and the risks associated with social commerce transactions. They showed particular interest in discussing fraud cases reported in Jeneponto and Gowa. During the introductory session, participants were introduced to the legal frameworks relevant to e-commerce, including:

- a. Law No. 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection.
- b. Government Regulation No. 80 of 2019 concerning Trading Through Electronic Systems (PMSE).
- c. Minister of Trade Regulation No. 31 of 2023 concerning Business Licensing, Advertising, Guidance, and Supervision of Business Actors in Trading Through Electronic Systems.
- d. Legal provisions governing electronic contracts and electronic evidence.
- e. The rights and obligations of business operators and consumers.
- f. The risks of fraud involving social media transactions.

The facilitator presented the material in accessible language and used contextual examples to help MSME owners and rural consumers understand the relevant legal concepts. During the session, participants acknowledged that they had limited knowledge of the legal protections available for digital transactions. Many also learned that electronic evidence may have legal validity under applicable legislation. These findings support Friedman's (1975) theory, which emphasizes the importance of legal culture in the effective functioning of the legal system. Public legal awareness can be strengthened when legal principles are explained through practical examples relevant to everyday experiences. The most engaging part of the program was the discussion of reported cases in South Sulawesi, including:

1. A motorcycle fraud case in Jeneponto in 2024.
2. A school uniform fraud case in Gowa in 2024.
3. A case involving an online fashion seller who allegedly disappeared after receiving payment.

Participants responded actively to these cases, and some reported having experienced or heard of similar incidents in their communities. The discussions became more interactive because the examples

reflected situations that participants could readily relate to. This engagement demonstrated the relevance of contextualized legal education in encouraging community participation and strengthening awareness of digital transaction risks.

4.3. Results of the Simulation of Safe Digital Transaction Practices

The practical simulation required participants to use their mobile phones to create digital invoices, save transaction receipts, verify seller and buyer identities, and prepare simple terms and conditions for online sales. The simulation results indicated that most participants could recognize and use basic digital invoices after the training. Approximately 70% of participants were also able to verify seller identities by examining account profiles, user reviews, and account activity. In addition, participants demonstrated a better understanding of the importance of retaining transaction receipts as potential legal evidence. These findings suggest an improvement in participants' practical digital transaction skills. The results are consistent with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which emphasizes learning through direct experience, reflection, and practical application. Before the intervention, only approximately 10–20% of participants demonstrated an understanding of the technical aspects of digital transactions. Following the training, the reported level of proficiency increased to approximately 70–85%. This improvement suggests that hands-on training can be an effective approach to strengthening digital legal literacy in rural communities. By combining theoretical explanations with practical exercises, the program enabled participants to apply the information they received to real-world transaction scenarios.

4.4. Establishment of the Village Digital Legal Communication Forum

Another important outcome of the program was the establishment of the Gunung Silanu Village Digital Legal Awareness Communication Forum through a WhatsApp group. The forum was designed to connect community members with the community service team, facilitate digital legal consultations, share information about online fraud, and support community-level legal advocacy. Following the program, the forum initially included 23 members. Its establishment represents an effort to sustain community engagement and provide continued access to digital legal information beyond the formal training sessions. This initiative is consistent with Golub's (2010) concept of legal empowerment, which emphasizes that improved access to legal knowledge and support networks can help communities reduce their vulnerability to legal harm and participate more actively in addressing legal issues.

Table 2. Evaluation Results and Improvements in Digital Legal Literacy

Aspects of Understanding	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Improvement
Knowledge of consumer rights	18%	86%	+68 percentage points
Understanding of the legal basis for electronic transactions	12%	82%	+70 percentage points
Awareness of the risks associated with social media transactions	22%	88%	+66 percentage points
Experience using digital invoices	10%	78%	+68 percentage points
Understanding of safe electronic transaction practices	6%	75%	+69 percentage points

The results presented in Table 2 indicate substantial improvements across all five indicators of digital legal literacy following the intervention. Awareness of the legal basis for electronic transactions showed the largest increase, rising from 12% to 82%, a gain of 70 percentage points. Understanding of safe electronic transaction practices increased from 6% to 75%, representing a gain of 69 percentage points. Meanwhile, awareness of consumer rights and experience using digital invoices each increased by 68 percentage points.

Awareness of the risks associated with social media transactions rose from 22% to 88%, an increase of 66 percentage points. These findings suggest that the community service program contributed to improvements in participants' understanding of digital legal issues and their ability to identify potential transaction risks. Before the intervention, many participants perceived social media transactions as informal activities with limited legal protection. Following the educational sessions, participants gained a better understanding of several important legal principles:

- a. Electronic contracts may have legal force comparable to conventional written contracts when they satisfy applicable legal requirements.
- b. Electronic records, including WhatsApp messages, screenshots, digital invoices, and proof of bank transfers, may serve as legal evidence, subject to applicable legal requirements.
- c. Business operators are required to provide accurate, clear, and honest information that does not mislead consumers.

The increase in reported experience using digital invoices also suggests a potential shift toward safer transaction practices. This finding is consistent with Widodo and Sulistiyono (2020), who reported that legal education accompanied by practical simulations can improve legal knowledge and compliance behavior. Overall, the combination of interactive legal education, practical simulations, and continued communication through a village-based digital forum provides a promising approach to strengthening digital legal literacy among rural communities.

V. Conclusion

The community service program on the legal aspects of social commerce was successfully implemented in Gunung Silanu Village, Jenepono Regency, and contributed to improving the community's digital legal literacy. The combination of legal education, safe digital transaction simulations, and the establishment of a digital legal communication forum helped strengthen participants' knowledge, practical skills, and awareness of conducting transactions through social media. First, the program improved participants' knowledge and understanding of digital law. The pre-test and post-test results showed substantial improvements in their understanding of consumer protection, the legal framework governing electronic transactions, online fraud risks, and complaint procedures. These findings highlight the potential effectiveness of an andragogical approach that incorporates practical examples and case-based discussions to improve legal awareness among rural communities. Second, participants developed practical skills in conducting safer digital transactions, including creating digital invoices, verifying seller and buyer identities, retaining electronic transaction records, and understanding the terms and conditions of online sales. The practical training helped participants develop skills intended to reduce fraud risks and strengthen transaction documentation. Third, the establishment of the Digital Legal Awareness Community Communication Forum provided a foundation for sustaining the program's outcomes. The forum serves as a collaborative platform for community members, village officials, and academics to facilitate legal consultations, share information, and strengthen digital legal awareness at the village level.

To ensure the sustainability and broader impact of the program, several recommendations are proposed. First, follow-up training should be provided to micro and small enterprises (MSEs) on business registration, including the Business Identification Number (NIB), relevant business licensing requirements, and product certification, to strengthen their readiness to operate in the digital marketplace. Second, participants should receive further guidance on secure payment methods, including electronic wallets and escrow services, to improve their understanding of payment security and consumer protection. Third, the program should be replicated in other villages with similar characteristics to address the growing challenges associated with social commerce transactions. Implementing these recommendations could help foster a safer, more

legally informed digital transaction culture in Gunung Silanu Village while supporting the development of a sustainable and trustworthy village-level e-commerce ecosystem.

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