

Exploring Social Media Citizen Journalism Optimization in Karang Taruna as Indonesian Youth Organizations

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the optimization of social media-based citizen journalism within Karang Taruna as Indonesian youth organizations. Using a qualitative approach, the research combines netnography and in-depth interviews among selected participants from Bandung City, Bandung Regency, and West Bandung Regency. The findings indicate that the optimization of social media-based citizen journalism in Karang Taruna is comprised of three interrelated dimensions: (1) Production aspect such as regular production of visual contents (images and short videos) depicting events in their community; (2) Narrative aspect, storytelling based on the context of the issue that reflects the identity of the community; and (3) Participatory aspect, active participation in the planning and distribution process. Nonetheless, the optimization process is still partial because of limited resources, unequal digital literacy skills, and imprecise management of content development

Keywords: *Citizen Journalism, Youth nOrganization, Social Media, Visual Storytelling, Karang Taruna*

INTRODUCTION

Digital communications technology has dramatically transformed the contemporary media landscape, facilitating participation in the process of information production and distribution. Perhaps one of the most remarkable transformations within this context has been the rise of citizen journalism, which is a form of participatory media through which ordinary people have taken part in news gathering, analysis, and information dissemination. Citizen journalism refers to the participation of non-professionals in information production, analysis, and distribution for the public good. The concept of citizen journalism has been used differently depending on whether it refers to individual citizen participation in the dissemination of information via blogs and social media; participatory media initiatives set up and run by professional journalists or civic organizations; or comments on news reports by social media users, who tag, "like," and share news and other pieces of content (Roberts, 2019).

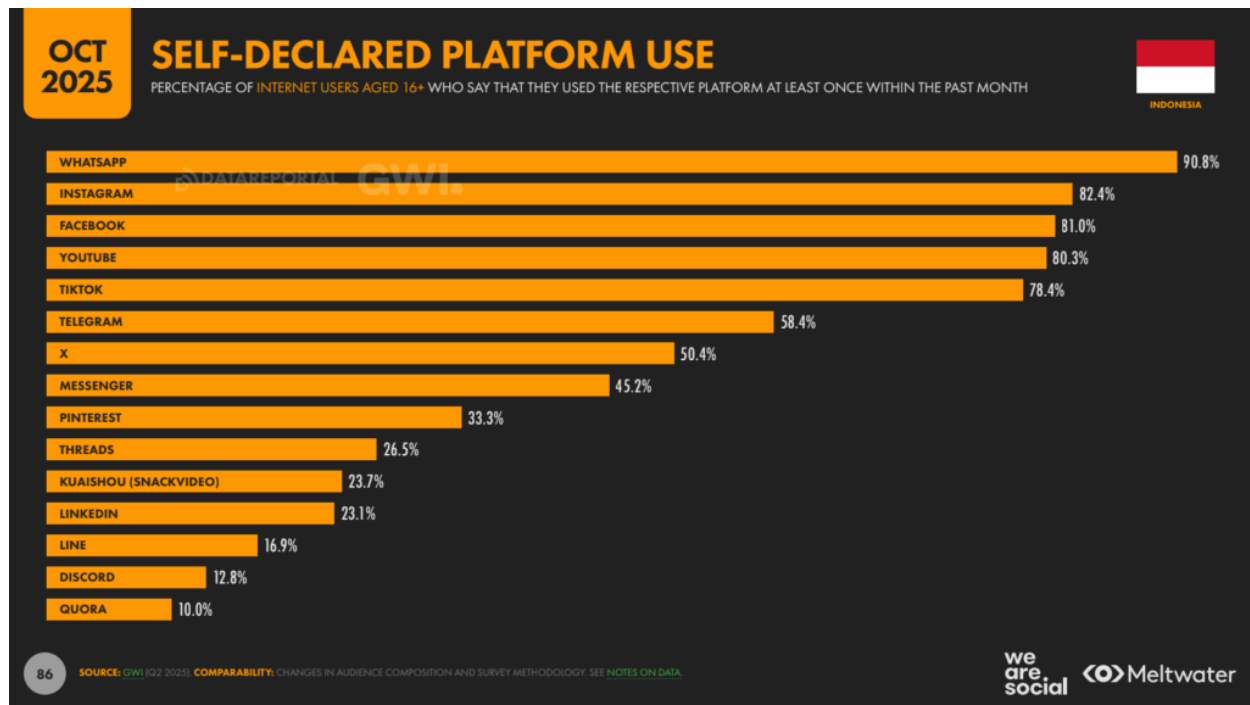


Figure 1. Self-Declared Platform Use

Source: We Are Social (2026).

Based on the survey shown above of internet users who is 16 years old and above, we can obviously see that Instagram has taken a slight lead and holds the number two spot with 82.4% who use the application at least once in a month. Other than that, Tiktok also appears to be one of the largest competitive brand holding the number five position, with 78.4% as its percentage of use. From the survey above it can be clearly seen that Instagram and Tiktok is one of the top most used social media networks among Indonesians. Citizen journalism can be exercised now by almost any kinds of individuals regardless of their social background and it can be participated by young people at a community level. In Indonesia, an example of one young people association can be observed as widely established across nearly all communities is Karang Taruna. It is the name of the organization that provides a way for young people to participate in the community society. The organization is an institution that provides opportunities for youth in growing their potential, social, culture and personal development (Ramdhan et al., n.d.). The active engagement of Karang Taruna in politics and publishing content is an indication that community media is increasingly gaining its independence and has its own tool of growth (Yasundari et al., 2025). Apart from the technical dimension, citizen journalism also has some implications to the participation in political and civil society: Citizen journalism, by having citizens writing and covering stories and phenomenon in their neighborhood and local community can foster democracy through a greater sense of transparency, accountability and awareness in the community. Citizen-produced media content generally involves local themes that include neighborhood development, social and environmental issues and community activities, thereby providing a more inclusive representation of public life. As such, citizen journalism can be conceived as a form of civic engagement that empower the community in public debate. In relation to citizen journalism development among youth's engagement plays a pivotal role, in which they have become key player in this emergence.

In Indonesia, youth involvement in community development is most commonly practiced within the context of a grass roots level youth organization called Karang Taruna. Karang Taruna are community based youth organization functioning at the neighborhood level and concerned with social welfare, youth empowerment, and community development actions. As part of Indonesia's framework of community development, Karang Taruna have been structured so that their young members have a way to be involved in social programs, culture and community service

endeavors With these steps, young members of Karang Taruna will have additional opportunities to develop leadership and to improve their community. Implementing citizen journalism into young groups like Karang Taruna will have very positive impacts on the community and the citizens. Because members of Karang Taruna organizations are closely connected to events and activities happening in their community they are positioned to report on and share with community members issues pertaining to social matters and development endeavors.

The young citizens in Karang Taruna organizations would be able to use citizen journalism as a way to produce local knowledge and provide local information not being covered by mainstream news. Also, citizen journalism implemented within Karang Taruna could help to establish community based media networks; such as blogs, social media accounts, community Web pages that share relevant information to citizens within the community. Such channels could enhance communication networks among community members and help to foster stronger community social ties and identities. Therefore, citizen journalism within youth organizations would be a community empowerment and participatory communication tool. Implementing citizen journalism in community based organizations is not without its challenges. The most prominent issue concerns journalistic ethics and information credibility. In citizen journalism organizations members generally lack professional reporting training and therefore also lack necessary technical skills for journalistic reporting, for example.

Within the Indonesian context, the investigation into citizen journalism activities of local youth organizations is a pertinent issue, considering the dynamic nature of the country's digital media environment and relatively strong community-based social structures. As one of the most populated nations in the world with a huge user base in social media networks, the country perceives significant implications for public communication, media discourse, and information dissemination. On the one hand, the importance of community-based organizations such as Karang Taruna still holds and provides a space for youth interaction and grass-roots social practices. On the other hand, digital media become a significant space of social connection.

This study looks at citizen journalism activities among youth organizations in Bandung City, Indonesia by analyzing how three Karang Taruna organizations within three different neighborhood units operate on citizen journalism in social media. Currently, social media is also used by several groups to carry out other activities, such as promotional media, community media, and communication media (Alexander et al., 2022). Research was conducted at three RWs in different neighborhood units namely RW 6 Pasir Ipis Jayagiri Village, RW 09 Sekejolang Village and RW 20 Antapani. The name of three organizations are Karang Taruna RW 6 Pasir Ipis Jayagiri Village, Karang Taruna Bina Mandiri Sekejolang Village and Karang Taruna Griya Aditya Unit 20 Bandung City. All three youth organizations involved in the research actively participate in social and communication activities in the neighborhood units. By investigating the ways that these local youth organizations take on citizen journalism initiatives, this study aims to analyze how they used the digital media in their activity reports and community information dissemination. Specifically, this research investigate how members of Karang Taruna organize citizen journalism, what types of content are being produce by them, and how does citizen journalism promote community communication and civic engagement. It investigates the obstacles faced by members of youth organization in undertaking citizen journalism, and proposes how participatory media practices within organizations might be enhanced. With the exploration of citizen journalism at the local level, this study can offer insights into participatory media and its role for youth empowerment and community communication. The findings are expected to provide insights into how citizen journalism can function as a tool for strengthening civic engagement and community development in the digital era, particularly within the context of Indonesian youth organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Landscape Citizen Journalism within the New Media Landscape

The rapid development of digital technology have revolutionized the nature and format of news production and distribution. News dissemination has been increasingly demedialized as ordinary citizens in contemporary digital settings participate in producing and distributing information, which has been generally understood as the framework of citizen journalism. This is the shift in communication patterns from centralized/gatekept to decentralized/networked ones. Current researches argue that citizen journalism is not just a new channel but a fundamental transformation of the new media architecture, facilitated by digital platforms and mobile connection (Zhou, 2025).

Theoretically, citizen journalism is related to participatory culture and convergence. The multi-peer "many-to-many" communication patterns inherent in digital media enable users to simultaneously function as producers, distributors and audiences, in which their participation is perceived to enhance newsworthiness and diversity of perspectives-especially with regards to issues of local significance which may be under-reported by the established news outlets. Meanwhile, issues concerning credibility and verification remain in the picture, as well as the lack of editorial involvement in these user generated contents.

With fast penetration of digital technology to develop countries including Indonesia, community-based information sharing facilitated through various forms of new media such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp groups has gained popularity in sharing local information, as is the rise of citizen journalism in these social contexts. The emergence of citizen journalism as a communicative practice and socio-technical phenomenon under the mechanism of platform algorithms and digital cultures demands attention to analyze how the communication practices of youth organizations have been developed on the new media. As citizen journalism is conceived in the context of a rural-level community-based youth organization, Karang Taruna, the establishment of Karang Taruna as a community-based youth organization covering village/sub-district level in Indonesia's villages, citizen journalism can be viewed as a supplement to the organizational communication. That is, members might not only deliver official news and information by formal communicative channel; in new media environment members might be engaged with producing and disseminating newsworthiness in order to inform and persuade in and to the community. Citizen journalism is understood as a socio-technical practice within platform mechanism and digital culture.

The Circular Model of Some

The Circular Model of Some is a model by Regina Luttrell which has four components: Share, Optimize, Manage and Engage (Luttrell, 2019). Share, is the part where there are efforts in sharing or disseminating messages or information by a company, organization, or institution through the media, especially new media (Luttrell, 2019). Optimize is a stage where the message must be optimized in its delivery. In the optimize stage, there are two things to be considered, namely listen and learn and take part in authentic communications. Listen and learn is the stage where the organization can see what the audience is talking about through social media (Luttrell, 2019). The focus of this research is to deepen this Optimization stage. Manage is associated with one means to convey messages that needs to be properly handled and conducted in an observed and controlled fashion. Engage on the other hand, is the phase that the company/organization is to put forth its message based on the features it carries so that it is well recognized by the public and its credibility can be strengthened. The circular model of Some can be seen in figure 2:



Figure 2. The Circular Model of SoMe for Social Communication

Source: Luttrell (2019).

The youth as the "digital natives" and emerging information producers

The literature consistently identifies young people as central actors in digital media environments. Youth, or "digital natives," were born into communication networks and are knowledgeable in various social media uses. However, it has become recognized that simply belonging to this "digital native" generation does not imply critical competence. Young people's digital engagement has been described in terms of five types of involvement: construction of identities, relationships, learning, leisure, and citizenship. Emerging trends in studies of youth and news (2020-2024) suggests a transition from passive consumption to active content creation. Social media platforms allow youth to tell their own stories, build networks of supporters for various issues, and take part in public discourse. Studies from Southeast Asia demonstrate that youth's digital activity has also led to kinds of micro-activism, hyperlocal reporting, and community storytelling. The driving factors of youth citizen journalism were political interest, but also social acknowledgment, peer approbation, and sense of community membership, making digital content creation an important way of forming and negotiating identity and visibility in a mediated society. Therefore, citizen journalism could be understood as both communication practice and performed action of youth seeking to position themselves in the public sphere. When these concepts are applied to Karang Taruna, members were perceived as well-connected public actors. This citizen journalism can be defined as communicative act or performed action of young members' self-positioning within the public sphere. With a structure that integrates youth organization and local governance structure, youth in Karang Taruna gain social recognition as a group, thereby making their citizen journalism practice different from the more individually driven and 'influencer' driven style.

Citizen Journalism as Civic Engagement and Community Empowerment

Beyond media transformation and media literacy skills, citizen journalism must also be contextualized within discussions of civic participation. It is theorized in participatory communication theories that the life of democracy rests on the capability of citizens to access and produce public voice. In a digital society this includes creating this voice within online spaces. International literature on citizen journalism increasingly highlights that community-based citizen journalism strengthens local deliberation, promotes transparency and enhances participation at the local level.

Citizen journalism offers greater access to public voice to marginalized or underrepresented individuals and communities. Within the local context, citizen journalism could contribute to local monitoring of public services, social documentation, or grassroots campaigning and advocacy. Nevertheless, citizen journalism relies on institutional trust and social legitimacy to be effective.

In the case of Karang Taruna, citizen journalism is strongly aligned with the aims of the organization, that is to promote social welfare and youth empowerment at the local level. When members of the Karang Taruna create and share information about community activities, local concerns or development programs in the community, they generate a form of local public sphere and possibly improve intergenerational dialogue, highlight activities organized by youth and foster the formation of collaborations with local stakeholders and authorities.

At the same time, youth organizational integration of citizen journalism has prompted new issues concerning governance, accountability, and sustainability. Who makes editorial decisions? How is truth being verified? How does digital practice alter organizational hierarchies? These concerns also highlight a research gap in the literature: little emphasis is given to the participation of youth organizations as collective agents in citizen journalism, particularly in Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative research design within an interpretative paradigm to examine the citizen journalism practice conducted by the youth organizations in Indonesia. Qualitative research methods can be defined as approaches for understanding meanings, interpretations, and the participant's world, without leaving the context or the natural settings in which participants report their experiences and meanings, and the researcher makes interpretation of the realities described by the participants (John W. Creswell & Cheryl N. Poth, 2018).

The interpretative paradigm means understanding social actions and social processes in terms of the meaning and interpretation of social actors and agents, suitable for research about participatory media actions, such as the

participation in the process of citizen journalism, occurring in community-based organizations (Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln, 2018). The methodology of this research is a descriptive analytical method which is conducted in order to provide an accurate and detailed description and analysis about the pattern, meaning and dynamics of the citizen journalism practice practiced by the youth organizations. By doing that the researchers can interpret the information about the youth members' citizen journalism action in creating and distributing the information about community through the use of digital media, etc.

This study was conducted in the three of youth organizations working in the neighborhood level: Karang Taruna in RW 6 Pasir Ipis Jayagiri Village, RW 09 Sekejolang Village and RW 20 Antapani. These selected locations are youth organizations who actively participate in creating the information about community through their digital medias such as social media. The field research was conducted between September and December 2025 in the regions of Regency of Bandung, Bandung City, and Regency of West Bandung. The informants of this study were the leader of and active members in Karang Taruna RW 6 Pasir Ipis Jayagiri Village, Karang Taruna Bina Mandiri Sekejolang Village, Karang Taruna Griya Aditya Unit 20 Bandung City. In selecting the informants, researcher used the purposive sampling method which aims to select the informants who have specific characteristics relevant to the subject of the study (Patton, 2015). In total, there were some key informants who belong to organization's management level and also from the youth members who are actively participating in electronic communications and citizen journalism practices. This informant from Karang Taruna RW 06 Pasir Ipis, Village of Jayagiri, District of West Bandung is the chairman called Gustian. Second is Chairman of Karang Taruna Bina Mandiri RW 09, Village of Sekejolang, District of Bandung called Agung and the third is informant of Karang Taruna Griya Adhitya RW.20, Village of Antapani, City of Bandung called Zidan.

Multiple qualitative techniques were employed to achieve a more complete picture of the application of citizen journalism by youth organizations. Data collection methods used were digital observation (netnography), social media documentation, in-depth interviews and literature studies. First, data was gathered using digital observation and netnography. Netnography is a qualitative research method that was originally derived from ethnography, and involved studying online communities and digital interactions (Robert V. Kozinets, 2015). Through this observation the researchers observed how youth organizations employed social media to communicate information regarding community activities, local issues and community work. Second, social media documentation was performed as a method of analysis of digital materials used by the three Karang Taruna organizations which consist of posts, photographs, images and captions posted on the various social networking sites used by the members of the Karang Taruna organizations. Third, the use of in-depth interviews, for all leaders and members of the three Karang Taruna organizations was also used to provide comprehensive data. In-depth interviews are studies where researchers examine the participant's perspective in order to get an understanding about the participant's experiences and attitudes (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and data gathered through this interview ranged on a few topics that were central to the study namely the role of the youth organizations in communication to the community, motivations for using citizen journalism, types of social media platforms used as well as the struggles in implementing citizen journalism. The last method employed in this study was literature study in which to get supporting information on the theoretical and conceptual background on the research that is literature based publications, books, articles etc regarding citizen journalism, participatory media and youth community organizations.

The data was then subjected to thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is one of the most commonly utilized approaches for the qualitative analysis of data. It helps in identification of themes or patterns within textual data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Various steps in the process were followed namely data familiarization, initial coding of significant statements, identification of emerging themes, and interpretation of patterns in relation to citizen journalism practices of the youth organizations. With the help of the above, data was organized in themes such as types of citizen journalism, youth and digital media, and media (social) as tools for spreading community news and information. The study aimed at enhancing validity and reliability through data and source triangulation. Triangulation is a strategy used for verification in qualitative research involving the use of multiple data source and/or methods to corroborate and build support for the findings of qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). In this research, triangulation was undertaken to determine by cross-checking the findings derived from digital observation, media (social) documents and from the interview with multiple data sources.

DISCUSSION

The Use of Social Media by Karang Taruna Members in Citizen Journalism Activities

The existence of advanced digital communication technology development impacts on the production and dissemination of information in the public sphere. Social media enables the public to achieve wider public involvement in public information dissemination including activities known as citizen journalism. As youth organizations like Karang Taruna, social media can become an alternative strategic medium which is able to connect young members of an organization and their community to spread information concerning the public activities.

When being interviewed by an informant, Head of RW 20 Youth Organization in Antapani Village, Bandung City, Zidan said that social media can be used for the promotion of activities among youth. "We use Instagram and TikTok for the promotion of youth activities here. It has been a long time if it concerns the use of Instagram and one year if it concerns the use of TikTok because we also use it for live-streaming of activities of youth" (Zidan, October 2025).



Figure 3. Instagram Account of Karang Taruna RW 20, Middle Antapani, Bandung City

Source: Instagram (2025)

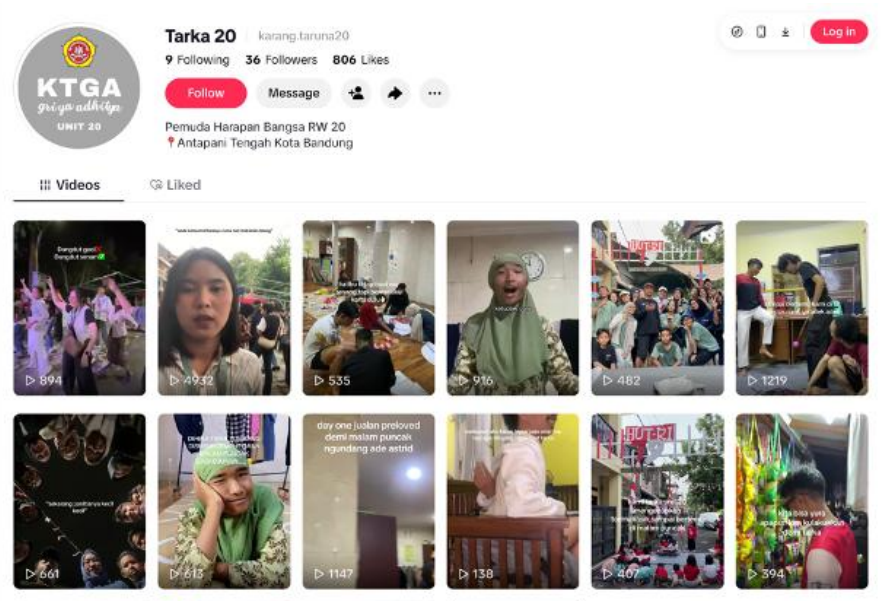


Figure 4. TikTok Account of *Karang Taruna RW 20*, Middle Antapani, Bandung City
Source: TikTok (2025)

Conversely, the chairman of Karang Taruna RW 06 in Jayagiri Village, West Bandung Regency, Gustian, admitted that he hasn't yet implemented TikTok at the youth organization of his environment. Currently, they still use Instagram. "We haven't made TikTok yet, because Instagram is inactive because each individual has their own activity but we will definitely learn later." (Gustian, September 2025)

From two young informants represents that young people within the organizations tend to have higher digital literacy skill thus they are better adapt to the use of social media (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook) as medium to spread out the information. The use of social media for public information can convey information about social activities, program for public empowerment, and local public activities directly and fast. This indicates that audience has shifted from passive consumer to active producer within the digital communication flow.

The public involvement in producing information leads participatory and democratic communication. Information is no longer produced and consumed only by professional media, but also by society that sees events directly. This situation creates many perspectives of local phenomenon to exist within digital public sphere. Based on this condition, the practice of citizen journalism done by young members of organization can be defined as participatory communication which creates wider voice for community on digital space (Zhou, 2025).

In local society, the social media also becomes a way for strengthening social ties between members of the society. The social media communication for community activity doesn't only act as documentation for the organization's activity but it is also part of encouraging community to involve in local social activities. Therefore it is evident that the use of social media is contributing to more democratic and participative conversations in communities (Stephanie, 2024).

Production and Distribution of Citizen Journalism by Youth Organizations: Karang Taruna

In the practice of citizen journalism, particularly practiced by young people, information production takes a generally simple, yet effective pattern in digital media. Information is gathered in the field, visual information is documented, a short report or caption is written, then published on a social media network. Since the distribution of citizen journalism reports on social media are made real-time and in a rapid process of production, information is distributed much faster than conventional news production.

With advanced digital technologies available, young people can create reports using an even basic device such as a smartphone. The existence of a camera feature, editing applications for photo and video, various social media, has opened up media production ecosystem for citizens. The existence of this fact encourages participatory journalism which involves citizens in the dissemination of public information.

The existence of media distribution features such as shares, hashtags, and algorithmic circulation on social media enables the distribution of content in a much wider network, from the local community up to reaching the masses. This way, local citizen reporting can even add and fulfill the lack of information published by mainstream media, especially local reports that usually are seldom covered by national media (Satria & Wiana, 2025). On another aspect, the citizen's reporting also involves the communication flow that goes away from a one-way communication, and toward two-way or communicative form of communication. Citizens no longer passively received messages that have been transmitted by the producer; however, it responds to the published message in a variety of form of comment, sharing, and feedback in general (Malnes & Najicha, 2024).

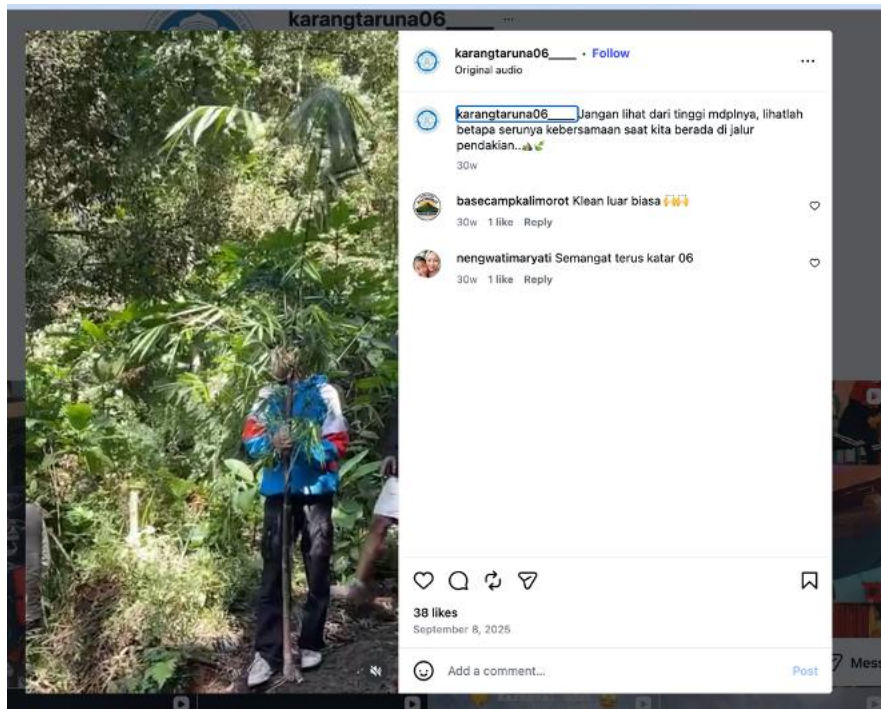


Figure 5. Karang Taruna RW06 Pasir Ipis Instagram Account

Source: Instagram

The figure 2 provides an example of how Karang Taruna RW 06 Pasir Ipis uses Instagram as a platform for citizen journalism, particularly for documenting environmental activities and promoting public engagement. From an academic perspective, this contribution highlights several important aspects of digital participatory communication.

First, the contribution demonstrates that Instagram functions as a micro-level information channel where youth organizations act as grassroots media actors. First, this example of visual content, where one of the members is

involved in some kind of environmental activity, can be described as a story told in pictures rather than in words, implying that modern forms of citizen journalism do not necessarily involve reporting but increasingly involve picture reporting in short posts. This corresponds to findings that allow for user-generated content through social media platforms as a means of turning the audience into producers of information.

Secondly, the caption of the Instagram post focuses on important values like solidarity, environmental awareness, etc. Thus, one can see that citizen journalism is also meant to convey some norms of behavior and reflect a certain community rather than just provide information. It encourages collective reflection ("lihatlah betapa serunya kebersamaan...") and therefore reflects a communicative aspect rather than simply informative one. This means that social media contribute to active civic engagement since people may exchange experiences and promote some common values. The third distinctive feature is the feedback from followers since they leave positive comments and encourage their fellows in what they do. This means that there is an opportunity to participate in dialogic communication since there is two-way communication involved. Engagement through dialogic communication increases the level of youth engagement, thus confirming the role of this group in promoting communication in the community. In the end, it should be admitted that a relatively low number of likes and comments shows that this post was not very successful. In other words, there is little audience engagement in this case, which can be explained by certain limitations associated with the use of social media by youth organizations. In particular, the use of Instagram shows that this organization experiments with a new kind of citizen journalism based on visual communication and engagement.

The Role of Visual Content in Communicating Community Activities

The use of visual elements including photos and short videos is vital when considering citizen journalism in social media times. Visual elements carry certain power and complexity in terms of perspective and appearance (Saputra, 2021). The visibility of visual content makes it more interesting and easy-to-understand for the audience in comparison with textual information. Social media platforms today are oriented towards visual elements; therefore, users tend to create and share content that consists of visual elements.

For young people, such content represents not just the documentation of community activities but also communication as a tool of narrative construction of community identity and dynamics. Young people can represent social activities of the community including community service programs, cultural events, social initiatives, and organizational activities through using photographs and short videos. These elements contribute to forming an image of the community, as well as building its identity.

Another benefit provided by visual content is its usage in communication as a way to attract the audience and make them more involved in social media discussions. Visual content can express ideas in an emotional and persuasive manner, thereby attracting the attention of the audience. Besides, visual elements are easier to share among users, thus contributing to the dissemination of information about community activities (Pandit et al., 2025).

Finally, visual content used in citizen journalism represents another way of the application of digital creativity on the part of young people as they use various production tools provided for creation of visual content through mobile devices.

Based on online findings, Karang Taruna of RW 09, Sekejolang Village has become the most actively promoting youth group via social media. Other than using Instagram, they have also utilized the function of TikTok in sharing their information. "We attempt to create visually-interesting content (such as aesthetic video), so that the potential of Sekejolang Village is also perceived by others". (Agung, December 2025).

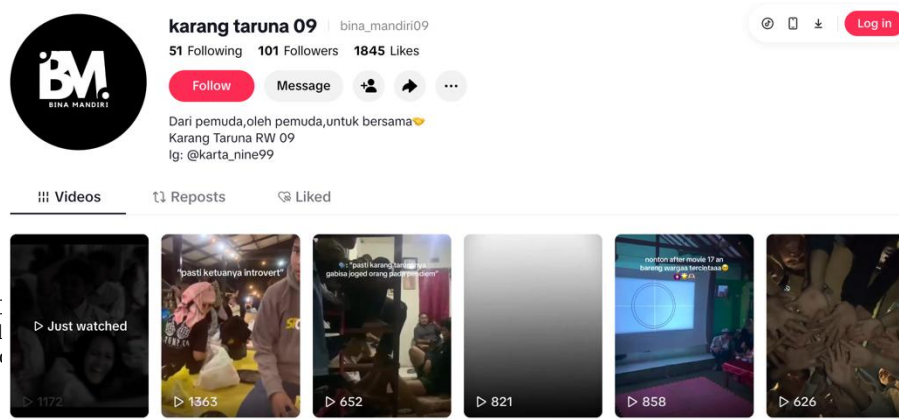


Figure 6. Karang Taruna RW09 TikTok Account

Source: TikTok

According to Figure 3 above, the video content presented by the TikTok account Karang Taruna RW.09 @bina_mandiri09 that social media serve as platforms for the development of citizen journalism in Karang Taruna and specifically in the dissemination of community information. Indeed, the TikTok videos include mostly short videos featuring the activities taking place at the local level from different angles – meetings, events, and interactions between the youths. It indicates that the visual approach is used for creating the content, as smartphone technology and editing become the basis for low-cost production of visuals. From the perspective of citizen journalism analysis, it becomes clear that the content fits the principle characteristic of grassroots journalism, people report events taking place in their surroundings. Regarding the story being told, an emphasis on daily experience, humor, and social interactions demonstrates that a localized community-based story-telling method is employed in the production of the content. Furthermore, while the traditional concept of citizen journalism would imply the reporting of news, investigative journalism would be the focus. However, in relation to the examined TikTok account, it could be claimed that its videos demonstrate the existence of soft citizen journalism efforts dedicated to promoting the community itself.

The aspect of participation in the production of media content is evident from the abundance of group pictures and activities. Indeed, there is much participation in the process of content creation; however, the lack of clear branding and design features shows that these issues have not been addressed formally as part of media content production. As far as optimization is concerned, the difference in the number of video views implies that inconsistent engagement with the audience is another sign of poor optimization. Additionally, it becomes clear that content creation takes place during particular events, meaning the increase in participation occurs then. Therefore, the TikTok page has not been transformed into a citizen journalism medium yet.

Opportunities and Challenges of Citizen Journalism in Youth Organizations

Citizen journalism allows for the creation of opportunities for community members to report the news independently of the mainstream media institution. Youth is able to document various social events and community development activities via social media platforms. This process enhances the role of communities as proactive communicators within the digital public sphere while providing more opportunities for the representation of local issues in the context of the digital media landscape (Zhou, 2025).

The second important dimension refers to digital civic engagement. The involvement of young people in citizen journalism practices leads to greater participation of the general public in the discussion of social issues of their local communities. User-generated content usually promotes different kinds of interactions like comments and discussion among other social media users. It means that social media serves as both a tool for dissemination and a public forum where social dialogue takes place involving multiple societal actors (Malnes & Najicha, 2024). The third key dimension relates to local narrative visibility. Young people are provided with the opportunity to create narratives concerning the identity and dynamics of their communities in the form of photographs and short video recordings.

These locally produced narratives allow broader audiences to gain deeper insights into community realities and increase the visibility of local social activities within digital public spaces (Stephanie, 2024).

Though there are benefits to practicing citizen journalism, there are challenges these opportunities present, especially in terms of credibility of information and media literacy. The content citizen journalists create is often not fact-checked especially when compared to professional journalism, thus, digital literacy, and an understanding of ethical communication become important in citizen journalism to create journalism that is responsible and credible (Nurjanah et al., 2024). Also, the media production skills and the technology available to the community can impact the content produced. Young people's ability to create content and manage media is not equally distributed. As a result, digital communication and media literacy training become necessary to improve youth journalism practices within the youth. This research shows that citizen journalism within youth organizations is not a way to only produce information, but also a means to empower the community, foster digital civic engagement, and create a greater presence of local stories in the digital public sphere. Young people use social media to communicate their local experiences to wider audiences, but also to encourage a higher level of active community communication in the digital age.

Research Results Model



Figure 7. Model of Youth Citizen Journalism in *Karang Taruna* in Indonesia

Source: We Are Social (2026).

One of the notable results of the research is the seasonal pattern of citizen journalism. Content production on *Karang Taruna* is most intense during the period of August of the three organizations. This period involves the

memorial ceremony of the Indonesian Independence day which is celebrated on the 17th August. Within this month, the youth organizations celebrate a number of festivals in the neighborhoods, with a number of traditional sports, cultural performances, parading, and gatherings. Those events create opportunities for visual capturing and narration, thus members become more driven and active in the creation and sharing of digital content on Instagram and TikTok. During the interviews, respondents affirmed the Independence Day celebrations as the climax of the community's cohesive participation. The youth members took up both the organizer and content creator hats as they captured all of the props, decorations, and community participation. Among the participants, the sharing of photos and videos of the competitions and other community activities on social media was rampant. The phenomenon of increased content creation illustrates the link between offline community activities and online media activities. Instead of consistent content creation throughout the year, the citizen journalism activities of the organizations predominantly occur during significant cultural and national commemorations. The phenomenon illustrates the community's social activities and digital narrative.

From a communication perspective, in the month of August activities are a kind of community narrative construction where young participants capture and appreciate national identity from a local perspective. By posting these narratives online, members of Karang Taruna take part in the circulation of grassroots narratives on national celebrations and foster a sense of pride and participation. Additionally, the social media use during the Independence Day activities enables the immediate visibility of the community events. Even beyond the social media users from the community, friends, family, and the users from outside the community can witness the August activities, showing how local young people's citizen journalism connects the local to the digital.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research found that the optimization of citizen journalism using social media among Karang Taruna members is an emerging yet unformalized process. Young members show dedication to local media creation through their use of social media (including TikTok and Instagram) for community documentation. The process can be understood in the layers of content creation, localized storytelling, and community participation, which remain largely informal, episodic and resource (both lacking in resources as well as in expertise of how to best maximize resources, the lack of expertise also in digital literacies as well as a lack in knowledge on effective content strategy) limited. While Karang Taruna is capable of mobilizing citizen journalism, its practice need to adapt to a more formal, structured and sustainable model. The study argues for improvement on digital literacy, institutional structure and framework on content creation and dissemination to strengthen citizen journalism practice. It contribute to the growth of the field of communication and digital media by recognizing youth organizations as a part of the civil society information landscape and that the social media helps in articulation of local issue and young participation on civic issue.

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