

Designing a Board Game to Educate Teenagers about the Dangers of Social Media using Role-Playing Mechanics

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan board game edukatif yang dapat membantu anak-anak usia 13–16 tahun dalam memahami penggunaan media sosial yang aman. Board game ini dirancang dengan pendekatan yang menarik dan interaktif untuk meningkatkan kesadaran siswa mengenai potensi risiko dan dampak negatif penggunaan media sosial. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah mixed methods, dengan wawancara terhadap orang tua dan guru serta survei kepada siswa untuk menggali kebiasaan mereka dalam menggunakan media sosial dan pemahaman mereka mengenai risiko yang terkait. Board game yang dikembangkan mengusung konsep role-playing dan race, di mana pemain dihadapkan pada situasi nyata yang mengharuskan mereka membuat keputusan mengenai konten yang akan diunggah. Sistem penalti di dalam game bertujuan mengajarkan pentingnya tanggung jawab digital. Hasil evaluasi menunjukkan bahwa 78,1% siswa memahami dampak negatif media sosial, seperti cyberbullying dan konten berbahaya, sementara 93,7% siswa merasa tertarik untuk memainkan game ini kembali. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa board game edukatif ini efektif sebagai alat untuk meningkatkan pemahaman anak-anak dalam menggunakan media sosial dengan bijak dan bertanggung jawab.

Kata Kunci: Media Sosial, Board Game Edukatif, Literasi Digital

ABSTRACT

Social media has become an integral part of human life, facilitating social interactions, personal identity, and economic and political aspects. However, its use also presents challenges, especially for children and teenagers, such as platform misuse, exposure to inappropriate content, and negative impacts on mental and social health. Although age restrictions have been implemented, many children still access social media in ways that do not comply with regulations. One solution to enhance children's understanding of safe social media use is through game-based learning. This study proposes the use of a board game with a cooperative game mechanic as an educational tool for children aged 12–16. Through this approach, children can learn interactively, collaboratively, and enjoyably, thereby improving their understanding of social media.

Keywords: Social Media, Educational Board Game, Digital Literacy

INTRODUCTION

Social media is a platform where users can interact, share information, and build social connections through digital content like text, images, and videos. These platforms allow people to communicate without being limited by distance or time (Pratidina & Mitha, 2023). According to Haryanto (2025) quote from a DataReportal report, there were around 143 million active social media users in Indonesia as of January 2025. This number represents about 50.2% of the total population of 285 million people.

Besides of being a tool for social interaction, social media is also used to make professional connections, promote businesses, and spread information. On the positive side, social media makes communication easier, expands access to information, improves marketing efficiency, and provides a space for social movements. On the other hand, it also

brings several negative impacts, such as the spread of fake news (hoaxes), cyberbullying, screen addiction, and privacy violations.

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) is a US regulation that stops digital platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram from collecting or saving the personal data of children under 13 without clear parental consent (Federal Trade Commission, n.d.). In reality, many children still access these platforms by using their parent's accounts or entering fake birthdates. This makes them more vulnerable to online threats like cyberbullying, exploitation, and inappropriate content. Recognizing these risks, the Indonesian government is drafting policies to set a minimum age limit for social media users as a preventive step (Reuters, 2025). A similar step was taken by Australia, which officially banned children under 16 from having social media accounts and introduced strict penalties for companies that break the rule (Kaye & Menon, 2024).

A real example of the dangers of social media is the case of Nylah Anderson, a 10 year old kids who passed away after participating in the viral "Blackout Challenge" on TikTok (Kamaliah, 2022). This case highlights how important digital literacy and parental guidance are, as well as the need for educational tools like board games to teach children about online dangers in a fun way.

In 2024, the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi) reported that they had handled over 1.3 million pieces of negative content on digital platforms. Out of this number, 233,552 were related to pornography, while more than 1.1 million were linked to online gambling. Most pornographic content came from websites, but social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) were also a major source, with over 10.000 cases. Similarly, online gambling content was widely found on specific websites and Meta platforms (Facebook and Instagram) with tens of thousands of cases (Mahmudah, 2025).

Children should not be left alone to use social media without parental control, considering the many risks of accidentally running into harmful content. Because of this, parents play a key role in guiding their children to use social media wisely. This guidance not only helps children understand digital dangers but also improves open communication and emotional closeness within the family (Zahara et al., 2021). One creative approach parents can take is using board games.

A board game is a type of strategy game played on a board with specific spaces, where players move pieces according to a set of rules (Ningtyas, 2023).

Several previous studies were used as references to support this research. A study by Sabillillah and Sutabri (2024), titled "Analisis Pengaruh Paparan Konten Negatif di Media Sosial Terhadap Kesehatan Mental Gen Z" showed that exposure to negative content like hate speech, violence, pornography, and hoaxes has a significant impact on the mental health of teenagers aged 13–16. Another study by Miranda et al. (2024), titled "Pelatihan Edukasi Dampak Positif dan Negatif Interaksi Media Sosial Terhadap Remaja di SMK Muhammadiyah Bangunjiwo" stated that social media education is vital to help teenagers understand both the benefits and risks of digital media.

Additionally, Johaness Witoro (2019) in "Peranan Orang Tua Terhadap Tingkat Penggunaan Media Online Remaja di Jakarta" showed that parental supervision is very important in shaping teenagers' digital behavior and reducing the risk of content exposure, addiction, and bad habits.

Looking at the game design aspect, Conny Rahmatilani and Mukhsin Patriansah (2024) in "Board Game Sebagai Media Komunikasi Visual Pendekatan Hubungan Harmonis Keluarga Antar Orang Tua Dan Anak" showed that board games can be an effective visual tool to improve family harmony.

Similarly, Salmy et al. (2018) in “Perancangan Board Game Mengenai Baik Buruknya Penggunaan Smartphone Bagi Remaja” concluded that board games work well to raise teenagers’ awareness about the pros and cons of using smartphones.

Moreover, Budi et al. (2025) in “Strategi Literasi Digital Tentang Cyberbullying untuk Murid Sekolah Dasar Menggunakan Media Edukasi Board Game” proved that their board game, titled “SARING” successfully helped elementary school students understand, spot, and avoid cyberbullying.

Lastly, a study by Aprelianto et al. (2022), in "Perancangan Board Game Sebagai Media Pembelajaran Tentang Pendakian Gunung" implemented a consistent visual design through nature-themed illustrations, climber characters, and game components based on the context of mountain climbing. This visual approach strengthened the board game's visual identity while enhancing the effectiveness of delivering educational content to players.

Based on this background, this study aims to create an educational board game designed to help teenagers aged 13-16 understand how to use social media safely through a visual design that reflects the characteristics and identity of social media platforms. With an interactive and collaborative approach, the game hopes to make children more aware of social media risks and how to protect themselves online.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to get a complete understanding of the problem. According to Sugiyono (2016), a mixed-methods design combines two research approaches to gather data that is more valid, comprehensive, and objective. This method is perfect for developing educational tools because it can uncover deep personal insights while measuring trends with numbers.

In this study, the qualitative approach was used first to collect data through deep interviews with teachers and parents, along with documentation of children’s social media activities. This step aimed to get a clear picture of what users need and experience.

Next, the quantitative approach was used to back up the qualitative findings by sending out questionnaires to students. This numerical data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to look at students’ levels of understanding, social media habits, and feedback on the board game design.

The research strategy follows a cyclic workflow. Sugiyono (2016) explains that in qualitative research, researchers can collect data, analyze it, and make adjustments all at the same time. This means that if new findings come up, the researcher can go back to previous steps to improve their understanding of the topic. The research stages can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Stages it the Cyclic Strategy

Problem Identification

Social media usage in Indonesia is growing fast, with over 143 million active users in 2025, making it a big part of teenager’s daily lives. However, it also brings negative impacts because children are easily exposed to dangerous content despite age restrictions. Many

underage children still access social media by using their parents' accounts or fake details, making them easy targets for cyberbullying, exploitation, and inappropriate content. On top of that, a lack of parental control makes these digital risks even worse.

To solve this problem, a board game can be an effective interactive learning tool. Board games are not just for fun; they can also spark conversations between parents and children while teaching social media safety. Previous studies have shown that board games can bring families closer and teach safe social media habits. Therefore, developing an educational board game is highly necessary to help teenagers aged 13-16 to tell the difference between good and bad online content, while raising their awareness about digital risks.

Data Collection

Data collection was done through three main methods: a literature review, deep interviews, and questionnaires. The literature review involved looking for information in journals, books, and official reports using keywords like social media, teenagers, negative content, and educational board games. The selected readings were chosen based on relevance, publication year, and author credibility to build a solid theoretical foundation.

Interviews were held with parents to learn about their children's gadget habits, the types of content they watch, how often they use devices, and how closely parents supervise them. Interviews were also held with teachers to find out how social media education is integrated into classes, what students know about social media, and how students behave with phones at school and outside.

The final step was giving out questionnaires to teenagers as the main target group. These surveys gathered data on the content they usually watch, how long they stay on social media, and what they know about threats like cyberbullying, negative content, and privacy issues. The survey also asked about their visual preferences, such as favorite colors, illustration styles, and types of board games they find interesting. This information was crucial for designing an effective educational board game that fits the traits of teenagers aged 13-16.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the collection process was systematically analyzed to spot patterns, connections, and key findings for the product design. The data was processed to form the actual foundation of the game concept.

An interview with Mr. Yadi, shared insights into how his child uses social media and his views as a parent. His child started using social media at age 10 under close supervision and got a personal smartphone at age 13. TikTok and YouTube were the child's favorite platforms, mostly for traditional art, animation, and fishing videos. Although he had never caught his child accessing bad content, he felt continuous monitoring was still necessary. He noted that while social media helps communication skills, it also has clear risks. Regarding board games, he only knew classic ones but fully supported developing an educational game to teach wise social media habits. The interview documentation can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Interview with Parent

To understand the situation from a school perspective, an interview was conducted with Mr. Danang Cahyo, a teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Ngadirejo. He explained that the school includes social media safety in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) classes and extracurricular activities, like a social media themed carnival. The school monitors public posts made by students and collects smartphones when students arrive at school, though enforcing this rule can be tough due to the large number of students. The school had never used game-based learning tools before but welcomed an educational board game if it could help students understand safe social media habits. The interview documentation is shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Interview with Teacher

After gathering feedback from parents and teachers, the next step was collecting data directly from the teenagers using a survey to map out their digital habits and online behavior.

The data analysis highlighted several issues. The main problem found was that most children started using social media much younger than the regulation age limit of 13, with the average starting age being 9 years old. TikTok was the most popular platform, followed by WhatsApp and YouTube. Also, many children frequently see negative content, while some students could tell the difference between positive and negative content. Some of them knew how to report negative content, but a significant group lacked this awareness, consuming content without really thinking about it. Regarding alternative games, most children were not familiar with modern board games, usually thinking of classics like Snakes

and Ladders or Monopoly. Lastly, the survey showed that a “chibi” visual style was the clear favorite among the children, making it the best design choice for the game.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Planning

The design process followed Kumara’s Game Design Process framework, which includes three main phases: the conceiving phase, design phase, and development phase. The process diagram can be seen in Figure 4.

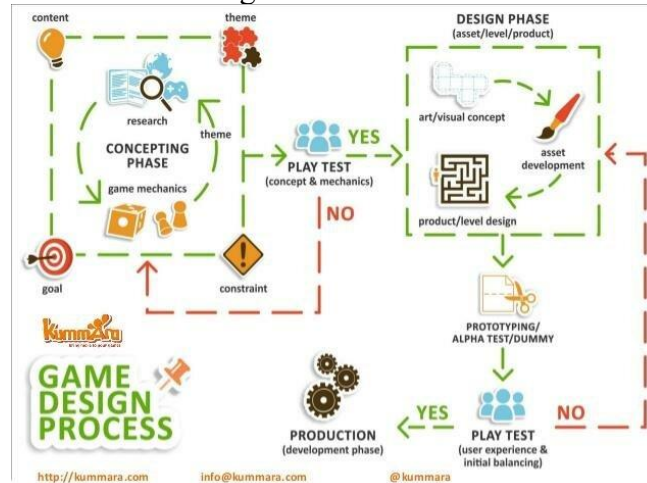


Figure 4. Game Design Process (Kumara, 2013)

1. Concepting Phase

Based on the data that has been collected, the next step was building the board game concept, which includes the game’s goals, target audience, mechanics, rules, theme, visuals, and story. This concept focuses on teaching teenagers how to avoid harmful online content.

The board game is designed to teach teenagers about the dangers of social media and how to protect themselves. The primary target group is teenagers aged 13 to 16, an age when many start using social media independently. To keep the game educational and fun, it combines two main mechanics: Role-Playing and Racing mechanics. The role-playing mechanic lets players act as a digital content creator with specific traits, helping them step into the shoes of a real creator. The racing mechanic adds a fun competition where players race to gather the most "Likes" and "Views" and the first person to become famous wins.

For the rules, the game features an Influence Bar, which tracks how the player’s content choices affect their virtual audience. This mechanic mirrors the real-life impact of sharing media online. If players constantly post negative content, the Influence Bar moves into a negative zone, showing that the audience is being harmed. If this tracker hits its maximum negative limit, a collective “game over” is triggered, and all players lose. This adds strategy while driving home the lesson that posting online comes with real-world responsibility. The overall theme is based entirely on internet culture, so all cards, boards, and layouts look like familiar digital spaces.

From the visual aspect, the game uses chibi-style character drawings to match what teenagers like. The color choices use branding colors from popular social networks like Facebook blue, YouTube red, and TikTok black, but the colors are adjusted to fit the friendly chibi art style, creating a familiar look for the players.

In the game’s story, players are content creators trying to build their online reputation and popularity while keeping their digital integrity. Every choice they take affects their Likes

and Views, and risky behavior brings platform penalties. Through this loop, players learn about digital ethics and the consequences of their digital footprint.

2. Designing Phase

After defining the core concept, the project moved into the designing phase, focusing on creating the actual art assets, card layouts, color choices, and user interfaces. This phase made sure all visual pieces looked good to teenagers and functioned well during play.

The game's identity, titled "*Content Rush*" was designed using a custom text logo paired with chibi character mascots. The name perfectly fits the theme: "Content" highlights the creator role, and "Rush" captures the fast-paced race for audience engagement. Visually, the title features a bold blue font with a white border to make it pop. The title is surrounded by four friendly teenage characters, as shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5. Logo of the Board Game "*Content Rush*"

The characters in *Content Rush* represent different creators, each with their own unique interests and skills. During the visual design phase, every character was built around their specific personality and content niche to create a strong story connection to their role in the game. Anita as intelligent and enthusiastic person focused on educational content. She has a neat, calm look with short brown hair and straight bangs, reflecting her organized and focused personality. Her large round glasses give her an academic look, highlighting her love for reading and learning. Erika as enthusiastic person with a passion for culinary content. She has bright golden eyes with a warm, glowing look, like someone who gets genuinely excited whenever they talk about or see delicious food. Bayu as energetic person designed to look like someone who loves exploring different hobbies and activities. He has light-blue hair that is neat yet slightly messy, giving him a relaxed and expressive vibe. Yuda as active and sporty creator with a dynamic look that immediately shows his love for sports content. He has short red hair styled in an energetic way, paired with an orange headband that makes him look ready to move. His dark-red eyes have a confident, focused gaze, showing his strong competitive spirit and athletic drive. These four characters are designed with visual styles that perfectly capture their traits, from their expressions and color choices to their special items. Players will step into the shoes of their chosen character, making the gameplay experience feel much more immersive and real. The character designs are shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Character Design

The game includes three different types of cards, each with its own look and purpose like Content Cards, Action Cards, and Mission Cards.

Content Cards are the main cards players use to publish their content. To win the game, players must match the requirements shown on active Mission Cards. They are divided by platform type using fictional platforms like Handbook, TuTube, and TikTak and content genre like education, cooking, hobbies, sports, and negative content. The card layout looks like a standard Instagram feed to keep things familiar, as shown in Figure 7.

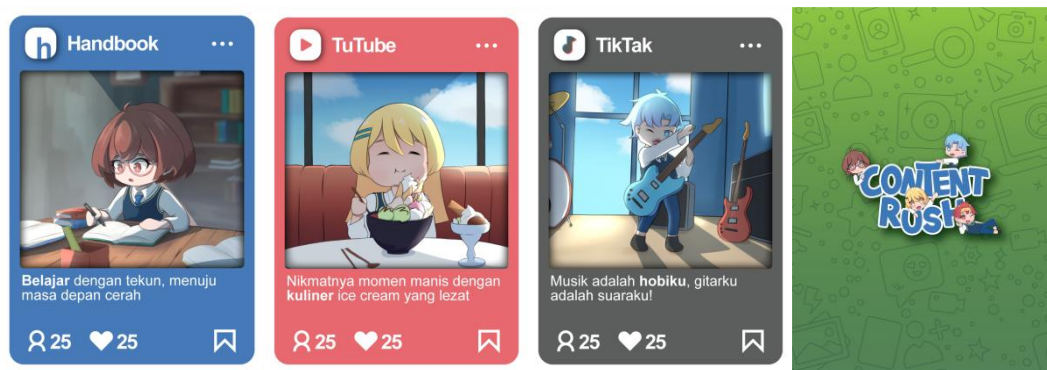


Figure 7. Content Cards

Action Cards work like event cards in classic board games, adding unpredictable twists and extra strategy choices during a turn. There are four types: *Algorithm Twist* (gives random viral engagement bonuses), *Internet Speedup* (lets a player post two content cards in one turn), *Trade Card* (lets a player swap hand cards with the deck), and *Claim Card* (lets a player steal an opponent's published content), as shown in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Action Cards

Mission Cards act as the main tracker for winning the game. Players have to compete these Mission Cards by uploading Content Cards that match the specific requirements listed on each mission. This setup requires a good strategy in choosing and using the right content to hit the targeted missions. Once the requirements are match, players can trade their

uploaded Content Cards for a Mission Card to earn victory points. The Mission Cards can be seen in Figure 9.



Figure 9. Mission Cards

Character Profiles work as a role-playing element, letting players choose a specific content creator. Each character has their own content specialty that they master. This mechanic is designed to add a strategic bonus, as players will get extra rewards if they successfully upload three pieces of content that match their character's field of expertise. The *Character Profiles* can be seen in Figure 10.



Figure 10. Character Profiles

The *Algorithm Dice* works as the tool that decides outcomes whenever a player uses an "Algorithm Twist" Action Card. This element adds a touch of luck to the game by randomizing the type of bonus a player gets, making the gameplay more varied and unpredictable. The inclusion of this bonus dice brings in an element of unpredictability, mirroring how social media algorithms constantly fluctuate in real life. The *Algorithm Dice* can be seen in Figure 11.



Figure 11. Algorithm Dice

Token Points in *Content Rush* represent the bonuses that players earn from Algorithm Dice rolls or by activating special abilities from their Character Profiles. These tokens can be turned into extra Likes or Views, playing a key role in boosting their chances of winning the game. The Point Tokens can be seen in Figure 12.



Figure 12. Token Points

The *Influence Bar* in *Content Rush* represents the impact that content has on the audience, both in positive and negative ways. This component works as a collective tracker in the game, where the accumulation of negative content posted by all players moves the Influence Bar into a negative zone. If this tracker hits its maximum limit, every player faces a penalty and loses some of their uploaded cards. Because of this, creators need to be strategic in keeping the Influence Bar stable so the audience receives a positive impact, while also keeping the game going. The Influence Bar can be seen in Figure 13.



Figure 13. Influence Bar

The Rulebook is designed to be short and simple, with the main goal of making it easy to read and understand. The visual design focuses on layout, information hierarchy, and clear typography to make the instructions easy to follow. By using friendly language and helpful illustrations, the rulebook makes learning the game much easier, especially for beginners. On top of explaining the game flow, card types, main mechanics, and win/loss states, it also includes quick scenario examples to help players understand the rules in real game situations. The Rulebook can be seen in Figure 14.



Figure 14. Rulebook

The Packaging for the board game *Content Rush* is designed simply with a square shape and a top-opening lid, making it easy for kids to open and pack away without any trouble. Its clean and simple visual design keeps distracting elements to a minimum, while the bright colors and chibi-style character illustrations help grab attention and give a friendly vibe. This approach ensures that teenagers aged 13-16 can easily understand what the game is and how to use everything inside right from the moment they open the box. The Packaging Box can be seen in Figure 15.



Figure 15. Packaging Box

3. Development phase

In the development phase, the digital designs were turned into a physical product. Material choices focused on durability and function. Content cards, Action cards, and Mission cards were printed on 310 gsm ivory paper due to its sufficient thickness and rigidity, ensuring the cards are resistant to bending and comfortable to handle during gameplay. To improve durability and preserve visual quality, all cards were finished with a matte lamination that protects the surface from wear while helping maintain the vibrancy of the illustrations over repeated use. Meanwhile, the rulebook was printed on 150 gsm art paper to ensure high print quality and readability.

The character profile sheets and point tokens were made by pasting printed adhesive paper onto thick yellow board to give them a sturdy feel. The algorithm dice were customized with vinyl stickers on each side, and the packaging box was put together using yellow board wrapped in printed stickers. All assembly, cutting, gluing, and folding was done carefully by hand to ensure a quality finish.

Product Testing and Evaluation

Once production was finished, the game was tested by an expert consultant and the target teenager group. The initial expert review was done with Mr. Hery Prasetya, a professional game designer from Hompimpa Games. He noted that Content Rush has good entertainment value and is well-suited for teenagers. The difficulty curve matches what a 13-16 age group can handle, and the look fits their style. He noted that the educational messages were delivered naturally without ruining the game balance. He also mentioned that the paper material was sufficiently rigid to resist bending while remaining comfortable to handle during gameplay. He highlighted the Influence Bar as a great mechanic because it makes players stop and think before posting bad content. Based on the supervisor's feedback, the loss condition related to the Influence Bar was considered too demanding for individual players and therefore required revision. The original loss condition, which applied individually to each player, was changed into a collective game indicator, requiring all players to share responsibility for keeping the Influence Bar in a positive state. He also recommended clarifying a few parts of the rulebook and verified that the box design was easy and practical for teenagers to use. The expert review session is shown in Figure 16.



Figure 16. Testing with Board Game Design Expert

The second testing phase involved 32 students from SMPN 2 Ngadirejo. The playtest started with a small group of students playing while the rest watched the game flow. Once the initial players understood the rules, they split into smaller groups to guide their classmates under the researcher's supervision. The student testing session is shown in Figure 17.



Figure 17. Product Testing with Students

Following the playtest, evaluation surveys were handed out to see if students' awareness and rule understanding improved. The data showed that 78.1% of participants clearly understood online threats after playing. For game mechanics, 62.5% of students picked up the rules easily without extra help. Interest in playing the game again hit 93.7%, showing high engagement. Additionally, 90.6% of the students found the game highly enjoyable and liked the visual design. Furthermore, 87.5% of respondents agreed that the game helped them realize the dangers of negative online content. These results prove that the board game successfully delivered its message while keeping students entertained. However, a few students had initial trouble understanding specific Action Cards, which they mentioned was because it was their first time playing a modern board game.

CONCLUSION

The educational board game Content Rush was successfully created as a tool to raise social media risk awareness among teenagers. Feedback from interviews, surveys, and playtests shows that the game is visually engaging, age-appropriate, and educationally effective. The testing confirmed that the game improved students' understanding of digital risks and generated high interest in playing again. While some students needed a little extra help to master specific action cards, Content Rush shows great potential as a creative learning tool. It successfully balances fun and education, helping teenagers learn digital responsibility as they navigate modern social media spaces.

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