



## The Role of Internet Access for Rural Areas And Its Utilization for the Community in Karang Taba Village, Lamandau Sub-District, Lamandau District, Central Kalimantan Province In 2024

Kariadi<sup>1\*</sup>

Nurhasanah<sup>2</sup>

Junaidi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah  
Palangkaraya, Kalimantan Tengah,  
Indonesia

email: [yadhirikoe@gmail.com](mailto:yadhirikoe@gmail.com)

### Keywords:

Internet Access,  
Rural,  
Communication,  
Village Development,  
Social Impact,  
Technology Utilisation

Received: January 2025

Accepted: March 2025

Published: May 2025

### Abstract

*This study aims to assess the impact of internet access on the lives of the people of Karang Taba Village, Lamandau Sub-district, Lamandau Regency, Central Kalimantan. The internet is increasingly important in everyday life, especially in rural areas that were previously less accessible to information technology. With the development of communication infrastructure, remote villages are beginning to enjoy better access to information. This research uses an analytical descriptive method with a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews and field observations. The research subjects were purposively selected with snowball sampling technique to ensure relevant and in-depth data. The results show that internet access provides significant benefits in improving public services, economic development, and education, but there are negative impacts such as addiction and the spread of negative content. This research suggests improving internet infrastructure and socialising healthy internet use to maximise the benefits of technology for rural communities. In conclusion, the internet has an important role in village development and empowerment if utilised wisely.*



## INTRODUCTION

Communication is a vital element in human life that bridges social interaction, conveys information, and fosters understanding across individuals and groups. In a broader context, communication plays a strategic role in sustaining the continuity of social, economic, educational, and governmental life. The ability of a society to grow cannot be separated from the quality of communication that occurs within it. Along with technological advancements, communication systems have undergone major changes through the emergence of the internet as a modern medium that has transformed the way people share information, build relationships, and acquire knowledge on an unprecedented scale.

In today's digital era, the internet has become an inseparable part of society. In Indonesia, internet penetration has increased significantly, reaching nearly all segments of the population, including those living in rural and remote areas. This phenomenon has created a new paradigm in the communication system, where geographical limitations are no longer the main barrier to accessing information. Widespread internet access enables rural communities to obtain up-to-date information, interact with the outside world, and make more informed decisions in various aspects of life. The presence of the internet has brought about structural changes in the social life of rural communities, including in education, health services, economic activities, and socio-political interactions, which were previously constrained by geographic isolation.

In the education sector, the internet has triggered a learning revolution by providing access to various digital educational platforms, such as video tutorials, online modules, and open online courses. This opens up wider learning opportunities for rural communities, especially for those with limited access to formal educational institutions. Similarly, in the health sector, the internet provides benefits through telemedicine services, online consultations, and web-based health education, enabling people to obtain medical services without having to travel long distances. This digital transformation serves as a crucial solution in overcoming the limitations of public services in hard-to-reach areas.

Furthermore, in the economic field, the internet paves the way for local entrepreneurs to market their products to national and even international markets through e-commerce platforms. Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in rural areas can utilize the internet to expand their business reach, increase production efficiency, and establish cross-regional business relations. Moreover, the internet also empowers communities through access to agricultural information, market prices, and other business opportunities. In the socio-political domain, the internet strengthens civic participation through social media and online forums that allow people to express their aspirations, access news, and actively engage in public discourse.

However, behind these positive potentials, uncontrolled internet access also presents new challenges. Excessive internet usage, particularly for social media and online entertainment, can have negative effects on mental health, such as anxiety, stress, and depression. Exposure to inappropriate content and social pressure to present an ideal image online can lower an individual's life satisfaction. Digital dependency also poses a risk of reducing productivity, weakening direct social interaction, and fostering harmful digital addiction, especially among adolescents and children.

Therefore, it is important to holistically understand how internet access influences the quality of life, particularly in rural communities. This study aims to analyze the role of internet access in the lives of residents in Karang Taba Village, Lamandau Subdistrict, Lamandau Regency, Central Kalimantan Province. This research will not only explore the positive aspects such as improved information literacy, access to public services, and economic empowerment but will also identify the potential negative impacts that must be anticipated through appropriate policy and digital literacy education.

By gaining a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between internet access and the quality of life in rural communities, the findings of this study are expected to contribute both scientifically and practically to the formulation of inclusive and sustainable information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure development policies that prioritize community welfare. Furthermore, the research findings are expected to strengthen the position of villages in facing the challenges of the digital era through adaptive, intelligent, and productive social transformation.

## **METHOD**

This study is descriptive-analytical in nature and employs a qualitative approach. The descriptive method was chosen because it aims to systematically, factually, and accurately describe facts, characteristics, and the relationships between the phenomena under study. According to Rakhmat (2000), the descriptive method merely outlines situations and events as they are, without attempting to explore causal relationships, test hypotheses, or formulate predictions. In line with this view, Suryabrata (2003) states that this approach is used to provide a comprehensive depiction of ongoing social phenomena, particularly concerning the role of internet access in rural community life.

The research was conducted in Karang Taba Village, Lamandau Subdistrict, Lamandau Regency, Central Kalimantan Province, in April 2024. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that Karang Taba is one of 3,435 villages

or sub-districts receiving the non-3T (not underdeveloped, remote, and frontier) village development program. The village has shown significant progress, with relatively accessible transportation infrastructure and community connectivity. It is located approximately 36.9 kilometers from the regency capital, Nanga Bulik.

The selection of research subjects and informants was carried out using the snowball sampling technique, in which the initial informants refer the researcher to other relevant participants based on the information flow required. This technique allows the involvement of parties outside the research location who are considered to have an in-depth understanding of the social context in Karang Taba Village. Several criteria were used to identify key informants, including having relevant personal experience, being an adult in good physical and mental health, demonstrating neutrality, and possessing broad knowledge of the issue being investigated (Bungin, 2011).

A total of ten informants participated in this study, comprising: the Head of the Department of Communication, Informatics, Statistics, and Encryption of Lamandau Regency; four village officials (Village Head, Head of the Village Consultative Body, Village Secretary, and Village Treasurer); one elementary school teacher from SDN Karang Taba; one health worker from the auxiliary community health center (Pustu); and three residents of Karang Taba Village (a farmer, a merchant, and a housewife). These informants were considered to represent various aspects of village life.

Data collection was conducted using three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, intensively, and repetitively to obtain rich and contextual data. An unstructured interview format was adopted to allow flexibility in exploring data from each informant according to their background and role. Observations were conducted directly in the field to examine and record phenomena related to the actual condition and use of telecommunication networks, particularly 4G internet access in Karang Taba Village. Documentation involved collecting supporting materials from various sources, such as village documents, academic articles, books, legal texts, and official institutional websites.

To ensure data validity, this study employed methodological triangulation by comparing and verifying data obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation. The collected data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model by Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes three stages: data reduction (selecting and summarizing essential data), data display (organizing data in narrative or matrix form to facilitate interpretation), and conclusion drawing and verification (formulating meaningful findings based on the processed data).

This method was selected for its capacity to provide an in-depth portrayal of how internet access contributes to the quality of life in rural communities – not merely through statistical findings, but also through dynamic and living social narratives. It further enables the researcher to understand the perceptions and real-life experiences of the community in utilizing internet access as part of rural life transformation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study, conducted in Karang Taba Village, Lamandau Subdistrict, Lamandau Regency, Central Kalimantan, in April 2024, reveals that internet access plays a highly significant role in improving the quality of life in rural communities. Based on interviews, direct observations, and documentation, it was found that the utilization of the 4G internet network has opened vast opportunities in the fields of education, health, economy, and social affairs within the village.

In general, internet access in Karang Taba Village is available and utilized by the majority of residents, particularly youth and village officials. Information from the village head and his staff indicates that the internet has accelerated public services, such as online population data entry, communication with the regency government, and village administration reporting. The village secretary noted that digital platforms like WhatsApp and email have become routine tools in village bureaucracy, replacing previous reliance on verbal communication or physical letters.

In the education sector, the teacher at SDN Karang Taba reported that the internet is used as an additional learning resource, such as accessing instructional videos, online modules, and networking with educators outside the village. However, limitations remain in terms of digital training for senior teachers and the availability of devices for students from underprivileged families.

In the health sector, a medical worker from the auxiliary health center (Pustu) in Karang Taba explained that internet access supports consultations via WhatsApp or other health applications, particularly in emergencies or when patients need quick information without traveling to a health facility. Nevertheless, challenges such as unstable connections in some village areas and limited digital health literacy among residents still need to be addressed.

Economically, residents such as traders and farmers acknowledged that the internet has helped them monitor market prices, search for product information, and expand their sales networks. One local trader stated that using social media for promotion had increased their customer base, both within and beyond the village. However, not all residents are able to utilize this technology due to limited skills and the lack of comprehensive digital training.

Another notable finding is that certain groups, particularly housewives and the elderly, still face barriers in utilizing the internet optimally. They tend to use the internet mainly for entertainment (e.g., watching YouTube videos) or basic communication via messaging apps. This highlights a digital usage gap between different age groups and educational backgrounds, which should be a concern in future rural digital empowerment programs.

Sociologically, internet access has fostered new forms of social interaction, both through local digital communities (such as RT/RW WhatsApp groups) and exposure to global information that shapes residents' perspectives on broader issues. However, as previous studies have shown (Bashir & Bhat, 2017; Rini et al., 2020), excessive internet use – especially among teenagers – has begun to show signs of digital dependency, characterized by reduced face-to-face interactions and disrupted sleep patterns.

Triangulated analysis confirms that the internet has generally made a positive contribution to the transformation of life in Karang Taba Village. However, its benefits remain unevenly distributed due to barriers such as low digital literacy, limited device access, and the lack of training and education on productive internet use. Therefore, policy support and comprehensive program interventions are needed, including community-based training, provision of supporting infrastructure, and the development of relevant local content.

Using a descriptive-qualitative approach, this study provides a realistic and in-depth illustration of how the internet has become an integral part of village life—as a work tool, a source of information, and a medium for social interaction. These findings emphasize that rural technological development is not only a matter of infrastructure, but also involves cultural, educational, and policy dimensions that must progress in parallel to achieve inclusive and sustainable well-being.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the internet plays a strategic role in advancing village governance, particularly in improving the quality of public services, transparency, accountability, community empowerment, local economic development, and the acceleration of rural development. The use of the internet has provided significant opportunities for village governments to establish more efficient, transparent, and participatory governance systems. Broader access to information has encouraged rural communities to become more actively involved in development processes and decision-making at the local level.

Thus, the internet is not merely a communication tool, but a crucial instrument for social and economic transformation in rural communities such as Karang Taba Village, Lamandau Regency, Central Kalimantan. However, to ensure that the benefits are distributed equitably, there must be continuous support in terms of infrastructure development, improvement of digital literacy, and the implementation of integrated and sustainable development policies.

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