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The Relationship between Social Media Exposure to MBG Food Safety News and Risk Perception and Trust among Active Users in Blitar

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of food safety narratives on social media platforms has raised concerns about their influence on public perception and acceptance of government nutritional programs. This study examines the relationships between social media exposure to food safety news related to the Free Nutritious Meal Program (*Makan Bergizi Gratis*/MBG), information source credibility, food safety risk perception, and public trust and acceptance among active social media users in Blitar, Indonesia. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed, involving 109 purposively sampled respondents who met the inclusion criteria of active social media use and prior exposure to MBG-related content. The findings reveal that both social media exposure and information source credibility significantly predicted risk perception, while information source credibility emerged as the dominant predictor of public trust and acceptance (R^2 = 33.41%). In contrast, risk perception did not significantly predict trust and acceptance (α = -0.043; p = 0.658), nor did social media exposure directly influence trust (p = 0.836), leaving the hypothesised mediating role of risk perception unsupported. These findings underscore that building a credible and trustworthy information ecosystem is more effective than merely increasing positive content volume in sustaining public trust in the MBG program.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped how information is produced, distributed, and consumed in contemporary society. In recent years, social media has evolved beyond a mere communication tool into a dominant platform for information exchange, including topics related to food safety and public health. The interactive and user-generated nature of social media allows information to spread quickly across networks, often reaching a wide audience in a short time (Lin, 2022). This dynamic creates both opportunities and challenges, particularly in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of information circulated among the public (Pop et al., 2019).

In the domain of food safety, the role of social media becomes increasingly significant as it influences how individuals interpret and respond to potential risks (Overbey et al., 2017). Information related to food contamination, hygiene practices, or safety incidents especially when presented in a sensational or negative manner can shape public perception disproportionately compared to factual risk levels. Previous studies indicate that repeated exposure to such information may amplify perceived risk and influence behavioral responses, including avoidance

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or distrust toward certain food products or programs (Ludina et al., 2025; Oh et al., 2021; Overbey et al., 2017).

In Indonesia, the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program, locally known as *Makan Bergizi Gratis* (MBG), represents a strategic government initiative aimed at improving the nutritional status of school-aged children (Herdiana et al., 2025). The program is expected to contribute to better health outcomes and support human capital development. However, alongside its implementation, various narratives related to food safety ranging from concerns about hygiene practices to allegations of foodborne illness have emerged and circulated widely on social media platforms. These narratives, whether verified or not, have the potential to influence public opinion and generate diverse responses toward the program.

This issue becomes particularly relevant at the local level, including in Blitar, a city with active social media engagement and a strong culinary culture. As a region where community interactions and information exchange often occur through digital platforms, Blitar provides a meaningful context for examining how food safety narratives are formed and disseminated. The widespread use of social media among its residents facilitates rapid information sharing, which may intensify public concern, especially when food safety issues are discussed. In addition, the presence of local culinary businesses and school-based food programs makes the community more sensitive to issues related to food quality and safety.

The widespread dissemination of unverified or misleading information further complicates this issue. Social media algorithms tend to prioritize content that generates engagement, which often includes emotionally charged or controversial information. As a result, misinformation can spread more rapidly than factual information, potentially shaping public perception in ways that are not aligned with actual conditions (Chen et al., 2023). This phenomenon underscores the importance of understanding how exposure to social media content affects individuals' perceptions, particularly in the context of public health and food safety programs.

Risk perception plays a central role in this process. It refers to an individual's subjective assessment of the likelihood and severity of a potential hazard. In the context of food safety, risk perception is not solely determined by scientific evidence but is also influenced by psychological, social, and contextual factors, including media exposure and prior beliefs (Yin & Lui, 2024). High exposure to negative or alarming information may lead individuals to perceive greater risks than objectively exist, thereby affecting their attitudes and decisions regarding food consumption and program participation (Gong et al., 2026).

In addition to risk perception, trust is a crucial determinant of public acceptance of government initiatives. Trust in institutions, information sources, and communication channels influences how individuals interpret and evaluate information. When trust is established, individuals are more likely to accept and support public programs, even in the presence of potential risks. Conversely, low levels of trust may lead to scepticism and resistance, regardless of the accuracy of the information provided (Gong et al., 2026; Sansome et al., 2025).

Previous studies have demonstrated that social media exposure can simultaneously influence both risk perception and trust, which in turn shape public attitudes and behaviours (Li & Feng, 2025; Rivas et al., 2021). Nevertheless, research examining this relationship within the specific context of food safety programs in Indonesia remains limited, particularly at the local level where socio-cultural dynamics may play a significant role. Understanding this relationship is essential to support effective risk communication and policy implementation. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the relationship between social media exposure to food safety information related to the MBG program, risk perception, and public trust among active social media users in Blitar.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative descriptive correlational approach using a survey method. The population consisted of active social media users in Blitar Regency who had been exposed to information related to the *Makan Bergizi Gratis* (MBG) program within the last three months. The total population meeting these criteria is not known with certainty; therefore, the Lemeshow formula is used, as it is appropriate for situations where the population size is unknown or considered infinite (Ani et al., 2021).

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p(1-p)}{d^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.1^2}$$

n= 96.04

Where:

n = sample size

Z = standard value (1.96)

p = maximum estimated proportion (50% = 0.5)

d = margin of error (10%)

Based on the calculation above, the minimum required sample size is 96 respondents. Meanwhile, the sampling technique used was purposive sampling, as random sampling would not guarantee the selection of respondents who had actual exposure to MBG-related content on social media, which is a prerequisite for meaningful data collection. According to Etikan (2016), purposive sampling method entails selecting individuals or groups who possess substantial knowledge and experience related to the phenomenon, while also considering factors such as their availability, willingness to participate, and ability to clearly, expressively, and thoughtfully articulate their experiences and perspectives.

The inclusion criteriain this research : (1) actively using at least one social media platform, and (2) having seen, read, or watched content related to the MBG program on social media within the past three months. A total of 109 respondents met these criteria and participated in the study. The research instrument was an online questionnaire developed based on a literature review and adapted to the context of the study. The questionnaire consisted of five sections: (A) respondent characteristics, (B) social media exposure, (C) information source credibility, (D) risk perception, and (E) trust in the MBG program. Structure of the research instrument is presented in Table 1. All variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Data collection was conducted in March 2026 using the Google Forms platform.

The research hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Social media exposure to food safety news about the MBG Program (X1) has significant effect on active user' food safety risk perception (M).

H2: Information source credibility (X2) has significant effect on active user' food safety risk perception (M).

H3: Food safety risk perception (M) has significant effect on active user' trust and acceptance of the MBG Program (Y).

H4: Social media exposure to MBG-related news (X1) has significant direct effect on active user' trust and acceptance (Y).

H5: Information Source Credibility (X2) has significant direct effect on active user' trust and acceptance (Y).

H6: Food safety risk perception (M) mediates the relationship between social media exposure to MBG news (X1) and active user' trust and acceptance (Y).

H7: Food safety risk perception (M) mediates the relationship between information source credibility (X2) and active user' trust and acceptance (Y).

Table 1. Structure of the Research Instrument

Variable	Dimension	Number of Items	Notation
Social Media Exposure (X1)	Frequency & Intensity, Content Engagement	9 items	X1
Information Source Credibility (X2)	Government, News Media, Public/Influencers	12 items	X2
Risk Perception (M)	Hygiene & Germs, Food Ingredients, General	12 items	M
Trust in the MBG Program (Y)	Program Trust, Acceptance & Support	11 items	Y

Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondent characteristics and to illustrate the distribution of the research variables. The validity test was conducted by comparing the calculated r-value with the r-table value. If the calculated r-value exceeds the r-table value, the instrument is considered valid. Conversely, if the calculated r-value is lower than the r-table value, it is categorized as invalid (Utami et al., 2023). The reliability of the measurement instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with a threshold value of 0.70 considered acceptable (Hussey et al., 2025). Associations among variables were examined through the Pearson Product–Moment correlation test. To assess the assumption of normality, the Shapiro–Wilk test was applied. Furthermore, Pearson correlation analysis was utilized to determine the strength and direction of linear relationships, while simple linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the partial effects of each independent variable. All statistical analyses were carried out using Minitab 18 with a significance level set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 109 respondents who are active social media users in Blitar. Based on the collected data, the majority of respondents were female, accounting for 68 individuals (62.4%), while male respondents totaled 41 individuals (37.6%). This gender distribution reflects the higher participation of women as active user of information on social media. This finding is consistent with the report by Nelson & Fleming (2019), which indicates that women tend to be more actively engaged with health and food related content on social media platforms.

In terms of educational background, most respondents were high school graduates (SMA/SMK or equivalent), totaling 86 individuals (78.9%). This was followed by respondents with a bachelor's degree (20 individuals; 18.4%) and diploma (3 individuals; 2.7%).

Regarding occupation, the largest group consisted of students (33.9%) and housewives (28.4%), followed by private employees and entrepreneurs. These demographic characteristics indicate that the segment of active user exposed to MBG related information on social media is predominantly composed of groups that are closely connected to the program, particularly families with school-aged children and younger individuals.

Tabel 2. Demographic Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	68	62.4%
	Male	41	37.6%
Education	High School (SMA/SMK)	86	78.9%
	Bachelor/Diploma	23	21.1%
Occupation	Others	5	4.7%
	Student	37	33.9%
	Housewife	31	28.4%
	Employee/Entrepreneur	36	33.0%

Source: Primary data, 2026

Instrument Validity Test

The validity testing of questionnaire items is intended to verify the accuracy of each item within the research instrument and to assess the clarity of the study framework (Utami et al., 2023). An item is considered valid when its calculated r-value (r_calculated) exceeds the r-table value (r_table). As shown in Table 3, all questionnaire items have r_calculated values greater than r_table, indicating that they are valid and suitable for inclusion in the questionnaire.

Table 3. Instrument Validity Test Results

Variable	Number of Items	R-hitung	R tabel	Description
Social Media Exposure (X1)	X1.1	0.600	0.1569	Valid
	X1.2	0.665		Valid
	X1.3	0.631		Valid
	X1.4	0.674		Valid
	X1.5	0.756		Valid
	X1.6	0.554		Valid
	X1.7	0.732		Valid
	X1.8	0.551		Valid
	X1.9	0.611		Valid
Information Source Credibility (X2)	X2.1	0.542	0.1569	Valid
	X2.2	0.631		Valid
	X2.3	0.620		Valid
	X2.4	0.580		Valid
	X2.5	0.572		Valid
	X2.6	0.257		Valid
	X2.7	0.583		Valid
	X2.8	0.468		Valid
	X2.9	0.316		Valid
	X2.10	0.330		Valid
	X2.11	0.583		Valid
	X2.12	0.415		Valid
Risk Perception (M)	M.1	0.629	0.1569	Valid
	M.2	0.779		Valid
	M.3	0.691		Valid
	M.4	0.740		Valid
	M.5	0.698		Valid
	M.6	0.598		Valid
	M.7	0.662		Valid
	M.8	0.553		Valid
	M.9	0.661		Valid
	M.10	0.719		Valid
	M.11	0.560		Valid
	M.12	0.536		Valid
Trust in the MBG Program (Y)	Y.1	0.740	0.1569	Valid
	Y.2	0.817		Valid
	Y.3	0.637		Valid
	Y.4	0.745		Valid
	Y.5	0.824		Valid
	Y.6	0.873		Valid
	Y.7	0.814		Valid
	Y.8	0.858		Valid
	Y.9	0.221		Valid
	Y.10	0.663		Valid
	Y.11	0.874		Valid

Source: Primary data, 2026

Instrument Reliability Test

The reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha indicated that all research variables demonstrated coefficients above 0.80, reflecting excellent internal consistency (Table 4). The Cronbach's Alpha values were 0.8208 for the social media exposure variable, 0.7201 for the trust in information sources, 0.7618 for risk perception, and 0.7670 for trust in the MBG program. These values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.70 as suggested by indicating that the research instrument is reliable and suitable for further analysis.

Table 4. Instrument Reliability Test Results

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Exposure (X1)	9	0.8208
Information Source Credibility (X2)	12	0.7201
Risk Perception (M)	12	0.7589
Trust in the MBG Program (Y)	11	0.7670

Source: Primary data, 2026

Instrument Normality Test

The Shapiro–Wilk test indicates that all variables are normally distributed ($p > 0.05$), thus meeting the assumptions for parametric linear regression analysis (Table 5). The Social Media Exposure variable (X1) produced a p-value of 0.052, while the Information Source Credibility (X2), Risk Perception (M), and Trust in the MBG Program (Y) variables each produced p-values > 0.100. The fulfilment of this normality assumption validates the use of Pearson correlation analysis and simple linear regression in the subsequent stage.

Table 5. Instrument Normality Test Results

Variable	p-value	Description
Social Media Exposure (X1)	0.052	Normal
Information Source Credibility (X2)	>0.100	Normal
Risk Perception (M)	>0.100	Normal
Trust in the MBG Program (Y)	>0.100	Normal

Source: Primary data, 2026

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis is conducted to examine the strength of linear relationships among variables prior to regression testing. The results indicate that social media exposure (X1) and trust in information sources (X2) significantly influence risk perception (M). However, risk perception does not significantly affect trust in the MBG program (Y). Therefore, the mediating role of risk perception is not supported in this study.

Tabel 6. Instrument Correlation Test Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	r (Pearson)	p-value	Description
H1	X1 → M	0.241	0.012	Significant
H2	X2 → M	0.246	0.010	Significant
H3	M → Y	-0.043	0.658	Not Significant
H4	X1 → Y	0.020	0.836	Not Significant
H5	X2 → Y	0.578	0.000	Significant
H6	X1 → M → Y	—	—	Not Supported (No Mediation)
H7	X2 → M → Y	—	—	Not Supported (No Mediation)

Source: Primary data, 2026

Linear Regression Analysis

Further testing using simple linear regression was conducted on three hypotheses that were found to be significant based on the correlation analysis, namely H1, H2, and H5. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Linear Regression Test Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t	p-value	R^2	Description
H1	X1 → M	0.00839	2.56	0.012	5.79%	Significant
H2	X2 → M	0.00833	2.63	0.010	6.06%	Significant
H5	X2 → Y	0.826	7.33	0.000	33.41%	Significant

H1: Social media exposure to food safety news about the MBG Program (X1) has significant effect on active user' food safety risk perception (M)

The results of the correlation analysis (r = 0.241; p = 0.012) and simple linear regression (β = 0.0839; R^2 = 5.79%) confirm that exposure to MBG Program-related news on social media has a positive and statistically significant effect on food safety risk perception, thus supporting H1. Mass media has long been recognized as a key factor in shaping and amplifying public risk perception (Kim, 2018), and this influence has become increasingly salient in the era of social media. Zhu & Liu (2021) argue that the intensity of news coverage on social media is directly associated with the level of public risk perception, with both government and media playing critical roles in framing issues perceived as threats.

In the context of this study, circulating content related to the MBG Program particularly viral news and videos concerning food poisoning cases, has been shown to elevate perceived risk among social media users. Respondents who are more frequently exposed, especially through visual platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels, exhibit higher levels of concern regarding the hygiene and safety of program menus. This finding is consistent with Abdurrohman et al. (2024), who found that social media platforms such as Instagram significantly influence the formation of public risk perception. Other study conducted by Zhang et al. (2022), also found that social media can influence food safety risk perception through the emergence of fear and the evaluation of individuals' ability to cope with risks. This indicates that the relationship is not solely driven by information exposure, but also involves more complex cognitive processes within individuals. Risk perception is shaped by a complex interplay of psychological, social, and contextual variables, including prior experience, individual health literacy, cultural values, and emotional responses, meaning no single variable can be expected to achieve high explained variance in isolation (Yin & Lui, 2024). Other factors, including direct experience, education level, income, and institutional trust, also play significant roles (Sayed et al., 2021).

However, the relatively low R^2 value (5.79%) indicates that social media exposure represents only one of several factors contributing to risk perception. This finding is supported by Ozili (2023) which state that in social science empirical modelling, a low R^2 is acceptable provided that the predictor is statistically significant, because the primary goal of most social science models is not to fully predict but to identify directional relationships. Furthermore, based on the effect size classification by Cohen (1992), an R^2 value of 5.79% falls within the small-effect category, yet it remains meaningful in communication research.

H2: Information source credibility (X2) has significant effect on active user' food safety risk perception (M)

The results of the correlation analysis (r = 0.246; p = 0.010) and simple linear regression (β = 0.0833; R^2 = 6.06%) indicate that trust in information sources has a significant effect on food safety risk perception, thus supporting H2. Based on the questionnaire data, the majority of respondents reported that they most frequently received information about the MBG Program through news reports or accounts of food poisoning incidents (62 respondents), followed by videos and photos of MBG menus uploaded by users (28 respondents), as well as comments and public opinions in social media discussion sections (19 respondents).

Interestingly, these sources of information tend to carry critical or negative tones toward the program. When respondents trust content from such sources, their perceived risk tends to increase. This finding is consistent with a report by the Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (2024), which found that 70.2% of the Indonesian public has a high level of trust in mass media reporting, making negatively framed information more readily accepted as credible. In addition, visual content such as photos and videos play a role in reinforcing this trust, as it is often perceived as more realistic and convincing than text alone (van der Harst & Angelopoulos, 2024).

On the other hand, interactions on social media such as comments and debates among users also shape how individuals perceive an issue. Exposure to dominant opinions may encourage individuals to adjust their views, thereby indirectly influencing both their level of trust and risk perception (Golman, 2021). Nevertheless, the R^2 value of 6.06% indicates that trust in information sources explains only a small portion of the variance in risk perception. This finding is supported by Ozili (2023) which state that in social science empirical modelling, a low R^2 is acceptable provided that the predictor is statistically significant, because the primary goal of most social science models is not to fully predict but to identify directional relationships. Furthermore, based on the effect size classification by Cohen (1992), an R^2 value of 6.06% falls within the small-effect category, yet it remains meaningful in communication research.

This finding is theoretically coherent, as risk perception is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct that cannot be fully explained by a single predictor within a simple bivariate model. This is aligning with You et al. (2023) finding which found that information credibility affects risk perception indirectly through topic concern, suggesting that credibility operates in interaction with other cognitive and affective factors rather than as an independent determinant. Although the credibility of information sources contributes only modestly to food safety risk perception, the significant direction of the relationship demonstrates that information sources remain an important factor in shaping risk perception. In addition to information sources, risk perception may also be influenced by other factors such as personal experience, digital literacy, and the intensity of exposure to various types of media, which collectively contribute to shaping consumers' risk perception of the MBG Program.

H5: Information Source Credibility (X2) has significant direct effect on active user' trust and acceptance (Y).

The analysis results indicate that trust in information sources has a strong, positive, and statistically significant effect on active users' trust and acceptance of the MBG Program ($r = 0.578$; $p = 0.000$; $\beta = 0.826$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 33.41\%$) suggests that this variable explains the largest proportion of variance compared to other variables in the study, indicating that it is the most dominant factor in shaping users' trust and acceptance. Therefore, H5 is supported.

The level of trust in information is influenced by source credibility, particularly the dimension of trustworthiness, which reflects the honesty and integrity of the source (Dominic et al., 2025) In the digital context, the role of credibility becomes increasingly important as individuals are exposed to vast and diverse streams of information. This condition leads users to rely on their perceptions of source credibility as a basis for evaluating whether information can be trusted, especially when their ability to verify information in depth is limited (Aldhamer, 2021) However, the R^2 value of 33.41% should be interpreted carefully. Although it represents the strongest effect in the model and is categorized as a large effect, it also indicates that approximately 66.59% of the variation in trust and acceptance remains unexplained. This finding is supported by Kasperson et al. (2022) which suggests that trust is not shaped by a single factor but by the interaction of social, cultural, and institutional processes. Bearth & Siegrist (2022) also found that trust in digital information is influenced not only by source characteristics but also by past experiences, institutional track records, and social norms. Similarly, Liu et al. (2023) demonstrated that trust in government has a more direct effect on protective behavior than risk perception, indicating that the role of risk perception is not always consistent.

Overall, these findings suggest that while source credibility is a key and dominant factor, it is not the only determinant of trust and acceptance. Other factors, such as direct experience with the program, perceived transparency, and social trust, may also contribute and should be considered in future research to develop a more comprehensive model of public acceptance of government food programs.

CONCLUSION

This study provides that, in the context of a government food program at the local level (Blitar) in Indonesia, information source credibility is the most dominant predictor of public trust and acceptance (R^2 = 33.41%), surpassing the direct effect of social media exposure (p = 0.836, non-significant). The non-significant mediating role of risk perception (H6 and H7) further advances understanding of risk communication by suggesting that trust formation in program contexts operates through credibility cues rather than through perceived threat levels.

Based on these findings, practical recommendations for strengthening public trust in the MBG program are as follows. First, given that 62 of 109 respondents received MBG-related information primarily through news reports of food poisoning incidents, the government should establish a rapid-response communication protocol, ideally within 48 hours, that deploys verified spokespersons from local health offices, school principals, and parent committees as trusted messengers whenever food safety incidents arise. Second, since visual content (photos and videos) was the dominant format influencing source credibility perception, the MBG program should produce regular transparent kitchen-documentation content, such as weekly live-cooking videos or hygiene inspection footage distributed through TikTok and Instagram Reels. Third, digital media literacy programs should be prioritised for the two dominant respondent groups in this study: students (33.9%) and housewives (28.4%), who are most exposed to unverified information and most closely connected to the program's direct beneficiaries.

In addition, the variables employed in this study remain limited in their ability to explain the dimensions of trust toward government-implemented programs. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the geographic scope to enhance the representativeness of the findings and to incorporate additional relevant variables to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing public trust in government programs.

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