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Bridging the gap in digital citizenship literacy: Insights from young digital natives



Rossi Iskandar^a □ 🖂 | Arifin Maksum □ □ | Arita Marini □

^aDoctoral Student in Basic Education, Graduate School. East Jakarta, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia;

bLecturer in Primary School Teacher Education Program, Faculty of Education. East Jakarta, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia;

Lecturer in Primary School Teacher Education Program, Faculty of Education. East Jakarta, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia

Abstract

This paper aims to explore the application of digital citizenship education in light of relevant previous research. By understanding the key components of digital citizenship and the challenges it poses, it will be able to develop targeted educational strategies to empower students to become engaged, ethical and informed digital citizens. Digital citizenship literacy encompasses the essential skills needed to conduct digital activities effectively. This includes understanding concepts such as digital etiquette for communication, critical ways to evaluate online information, digital security practices, and accessing and interacting with various media. The data collection method used in the research was a survey with a qualitative approach and data triangulation. The focus of the survey was to explore information about the understanding of digital citizenship literacy in the aspects of technology application, literacy, responsibility, leadership and communication. The survey was conducted to people aged 15-25 years to determine find out and analyze the understanding of digital citizenship literacy. The results showed that as a young digital citizen, it is necessary to increase privacy awareness to improve education about the importance of privacy settings and digital security. As well as encouraging community involvement in social campaigns to improve digital citizenship literacy. The digital age requires new learning that can connect and develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes of students who are competent in the digital age

Keywords: Digital, citizenship, literacy

1. Introduction

One of the critical literacies in 21st-century life is citizenship literacy. This can be taught from an early age in a simple, contextual manner appropriate to the level of cognitive ability. Various activities have rapidly shifted from conventional activities to digitalization. The digital era has shaped citizens, who routinely use the internet in their daily lives as a necessity (S. Cortesi et al., 2020). Thus, whether society is prepared or not, they will inevitably migrate and coalesce into a new entity known as digital citizenship. Digital citizenship refers to activities performed by individuals using internet technology as a medium to seek and process information to meet daily needs (Blevins et al., 2014; Emejulu & Mcgregor, 2019). Digital citizenship has become a topical issue in citizenship studies, particularly regarding with respect to how to instill the character of an intelligent and wise digital citizen in the face of globalization and technological advancements (Gleason & Von Gillern, 2018; Kim & Choi, 2018; Peart et al., 2020). This issue highlights that digital citizenship has become a discussion in education and academia, particularly concerning cultivating the character of intelligent and wise citizens amidst the flow of globalization and technological development. According to the OECD (2019), digital skills are essential infor ensuring that students engage with technology safely and responsibly, whether at school, in the community, or at home. These skills are foundational in fostering active and ethical technology users from an early age. The concept of digital citizenship has thus become integral to empowering communities, enabling citizens to assume active and responsible roles in the digital realm. This responsibility is particularly relevant for individuals who view internet usage as an everyday necessity, as it encourages adherence to established norms and ethical behavior in online activities (Burns & Gottschalk, 2019; Finkenauer et al., 2020). In light of these concepts, it is imperative that today's young citizens actively and responsibly navigate the advancements in internet technology.

In practice, several challenges persist within the concept of digital citizenship literacy that require, which requires further attention. These challenges include educators' limited technological literacy, the spread of misinformation,

a lack of interest in reading, and insufficient comprehension of the material students engage with. Additionally, the issue of citizenship literacy, particularly in relation to national character values, is critical for shaping future generations. These values are foundational in developing a generation with strong personalities and good moral character. National character values are intrinsically linked to literacy, as the integration of literacy within the school environment fosters character traits such as discipline, creativity, a passion for learning, respect for achievements, reading habits, social and communication skills, and a sense of responsibility. These values are conveyed both directly and indirectly through the learning process.

Digital citizenship literacy is an essential component of modern education, aimed at equipping students with the skills necessary to engage responsibly in the digital world. Research indicates that incorporating digital citizenship into primary school curricula helps students develop positive digital ethics, behavior, and habits (Li et al., 2023). Moreover, studies have shown that primary school teachers are increasingly implementing digital citizenship principles effectively, emphasizing the importance of further enhancing educators' digital literacy (Alqirnas, 2022). Furthermore, projects focused on digital citizenship education for young children have proven successful in empowering students to become proactive and influential citizens in the digital era ("Empower. Communities with Media Lit.," 2022). However, some studies suggest that a more critical approach to digital citizenship education is needed, one that ensures that students not only learn about but also actively practice meaningful digital citizenship (Tadlaoui-Brahmi et al., 2022). This approach calls for adeeper engagement with the concept of digital citizenship, where students develop not only the knowledge but also the critical thinking and ethical behavior necessary to navigate the digital landscape.

2. Materials and Methodsmethods

Digital citizenship is considered a vital component of modern education, as it provides individuals with the essential skills and knowledge needed to navigate the digital environment effectively and engage meaningfully within digital communities (Gillern et al., 2022; Aini, 2023; Lü et al., 2023). At its core, digital citizenship is underpinned by digital literacy, which is understood to include the ability to critically analyze, create, and share digital content (Gillern et al., 2022; Prasetiyo et al., 2021; Latif, 2023). The importance of developing digital literacy as the foundation of digital citizenship has been emphasized by researchers, as it enables individuals to engage as responsible, ethical, and active digital citizens (Aini, 2023; Prasetiyo et a

Digital Citizenship Literacy Survey Questionnaire

The following table presents the aspects and indicators that were explored in the survey. Each question aims to gather specific insights into how individuals engage with digital technologies and their understanding of digital citizenship principles.

Table-1. Digital Citizenship Literacy Survey Questionnaire

| Aspect | Indicator | Questions |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Technology Application | Technology and internet Use | How often do you use the internet daily? What purpose do you use the internet for most frequently? Which social media platform do you use most often? |
| Citizenship Literacy | Understanding Digital Citizenship | 4. Do you know what digital citizenship literacy is? 5. How important do you think digital citizenship literacy is in daily life? 6. How well do you understand your rights and responsibilities as a digital citizen? |
| Responsibility | Digital Ethics and Security | 7. Have you received information about internet ethics at school? 8. How often do you verify the accuracy of information before sharing it on social media? 9. Do you know how to protect your privacy and personal data online? 10. Have you ever experienced or witnessed cyberbullying? |
| Leadership | Involvement in Digital Communities | 11. Have you ever participated in online discussions or forums about societal or political issues?12. Do you feel that your voice is heard within digital communities?13. Do you know how to report inappropriate or harmful content on digital platforms? |
| Communication | Awareness and Action | 14. Are you active in social campaigns or movements on social media?15. How do you contribute to creating a positive digital environment? |

Participants

The participants in this study were students in Indonesia. The survey was conducted using the criteria of <u>15-25-15-25</u>-year-olds to understand and analyze their comprehension of digital citizenship literacy. <u>Participants The participants</u> were selected purposively to ensure <u>the representativeness</u> of the population being studied.

Data Collection

Data collection in this study is the most strategic step, as the main objective is to gather relevant data. The data collection techniques employed include documentation, observation, and interviews. Documentation was used to gather relevant secondary data, whilewhereas observation and interviews were utilized to collect in-depth primary data.

Data Analysisanalysis

The data collected <u>isare</u> predominantly qualitative, and the analysis technique is qualitative. The data collected from the questionnaires are processed <u>usingvia</u> software to facilitate quicker and more accurate processing. The data are presented in graphs and tables to make <u>itthem</u> easier to read and understand. Qualitative analysis is conducted <u>usingvia</u> an interactive model involving data reduction, data presentation, and drawing/verifying conclusions.

3. Results and Discussion

Digital Citizenship Literacy in Afrom a Global Perspective

Digital Citizenship citizenship

From the colonial period to contemporary times, education in Indonesia has been shaped by government regulations during each specific period. In this century, advancements in the educational sector in Indonesia have been supported by the rapid expansion of information and communication technology. IncorporatingThe incorporation of technology into the educational sphere, called Education 4.0, has emerged as a primary governmental objective to enhance educational services and facilitate learning (Hidayaht et al., 2022). Digital citizenship pertains to individuals' responsible and appropriate use of technology, emphasizing the cultivation of safe, ethical, and efficient online behavior in the digital world (Milenkova & Lendzhova, 2021). Researchers have identified several core elements of digital citizenship, including internet safety, privacy and security, online relationships and communication, digital footprint and reputation, and information literacy. Understanding these aspects of digital citizenship is crucial, as they shape how individuals interact with technology and the broader digital ecosystem (Hussainy & Jamalullah R, 2021).

Digital citizenship is an evolving concept that refers to the ability of individuals to participate responsibly in the digital world. Digital literacy is a vital aspect of digital citizenship, involving and involves accessing, understanding, evaluating, and creating digital content (Agir & Mohd Matore, 2022). Digital literacy has become increasingly important in education as digital technology becomes more integrated into learning. Higher education institutions are considered suitable partners for promoting the enhancement and equitable distribution of digital literacy skills in society, as they possess sufficient resources in terms of both human and technological capacities (Setiawan, 2017). Comprehensive digital literacy encompasses technical skills and an ethical and cultural understanding of digital technology use. This is essential to ensure that society can use technology wisely and responsibly.

Digital technology has become a significant concern in education, sparking input and debate about incorporating digital citizenship into academic curricula . This involves stakeholders examining the principles of digital citizenship to integrate them into age-appropriate educational activities and lessons for students to use digital media responsibly and effectively (Milenkova & Lendzhova, 2021). Successful integration of digital citizenship education requires a multifaceted approach, addressing that addresses technical skills, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and social-emotional learning (S. Cortesi et al., 2020). By developing these interdisciplinary competencies, educators can help students comprehensively understand digital citizenship and its relevance to their lives . Despite the broad recognition of the importance of digital citizenship education, several challenges and considerations must be addressed (Galliani et al., 2010; Milenkova & Lendzhova, 2021). One of the main challenges is ensuring that the digital citizenship curriculum is well–defined, with clear learning objectives and measurable outcomes (Milenkova & Lendzhova, 2021). Additionally, the rapidly evolving nature of digital technology necessitates continuous adaptation and refinement of educational approaches to keep pace with emerging trends and issues.

Furthermore, addressing the digital divide requires considering socio-economic and demographic factors that significantly affectingaffect individuals' ability to engage in and benefit from digital citizenship programs. Effective digital citizenship education requires a diverse approach . This includes integrating digital citizenship education into existing academic curricula, offering standalone digital citizenship courses, and providing professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their digital citizenship competencies (L. M. Jones & Mitchell, 2016). Partnerships between educational institutions, community organizations, and industry stakeholders can help create a comprehensive support system for digital citizenship education. By leveraging these collaborative efforts, educators can develop and refine digital citizenship programs that respond to their students' unique needs and challenges. Promoting digital citizenship education globally presents both challenges and opportunities. Challenges include addressing cyberbullying, hacking, and responsible online behavior. Conservative educational policies focusing on grammar rather than culture pose barriers to promoting global citizenship education.

Digital Citizenship Literacy

Digital citizenship literacy has gained increasing attention in academic and policy discussions in recent years. This is due to the growing recognition that ubiquitous digital technology has fundamentally altered how individuals engage with their communities and exercise their civic rights and responsibilities (Giralt et al., 2022; Wones, 2009). Digital citizenship literacy encompasses a range of skills and competencies necessary for meaningful participation in digital public spaces (Gonzalez, 2008; Milenkova & Lendzhova, 2021). Researchers have proposed various frameworks to understand and assess digital citizenship literacy. One influential model, developed by the DIGCOMP project, identifies five key dimensions: information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety, and problem–solving (Pérez-Escoda et al., 2019). Similarly, other scholars have emphasized fostering digital skills related to online safety, privacy, digital footprints, critical media literacy, and ethical technology use (Milenkova & Lendzhova, 2021).

Literature analysis reveals that developing digital citizenship literacy is not merely a technical exercise but also a complex social and cultural process (Milenkova & Lendzhova, 2021; Pérez-Escoda et al., 2019). Effective digital citizenship education must address the socio economicsocioeconomic and political factors that shape individual and community engagement in the digital realm (Wones, 2009). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the critical role of digital literacy in facilitating civic participation and community building during periods of social crisis (Milenkova & Lendzhova, 2021). Examining the concept of digital citizenship literacy as presented by various experts, it is clear that the understanding encompasses a diverse range of skills and competencies. As digital technology permeates all social, political, and economic aspects, developing digital citizenship literacy will become becomes vital to ensure meaningful and equitable societal engagement. Reports based on research reviews (Cubukcu & Bazyan, 2016) highlight substantial differences in digital citizenship literacy levels across various countries. The United States leads with a literacy rate of 85%, followed by Canada at 82% and the United Kingdom at 78%. In contrast, India lags with a literacy rate of 58%, while whereas Brazil and China hover aroundat approximately 63% and 68%, respectively, as illustrated in Table 1:

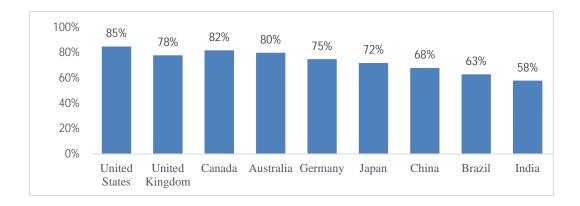


Figure 1. Digital Citizenship Literacy Index

The table above indicates significant variations in digital citizenship literacy levels across different countries

-Escoda et al., 2019). The United States, Canada, and Australia exhibitpresent relatively high levels of digital citizenship literacy, whilewhereas India and Brazil lag (Pérez-Escoda et al., 2019; Richardson et al., 2021). These disparities can be attributed to various factors, including educational policies, access to technology, and overall digital infrastructure

. While developed countries have made significant strides in integrating digital literacy into their educational curricula, developing countries often face challenges in equipping their citizens with the necessary digital skills and opportunities for full participation in the digital era. These findings underscore the need to address the digital divide and ensure equal access to the infrastructure and knowledge necessary for thriving in the digital age. As digital literacy becomes increasingly tied to civic engagement, fully participating in the digital landscape is crucial for individuals to exercise their rights and fulfill their responsibilities as digital citizens.

Survey Onon Digital Citizenship Literacy Amongamong Generation Z In Indonesia

Based on the The survey results regarding the understanding of digital citizenship literacy among Gen Z in Indonesia, it was found revealed that most respondents use the internet for more than five hours a day. This extensive use of digital technology is primarily for educational purposes, social media, and entertainment. According to Karen Mossberger, high internet usage duration indicates a significant dependence on digital technology, which could impact mental health and life balance (Mossberger et al., 2017; Sudulich, 2008; Wright, 2008). Therefore, a solid understanding of digital literacy is crucial to ensure responsible usage. The Journal of Media Literacy Education suggests that the diverse use of the internet for various purposes indicates a positive trend toward multi-dimensional multidimensional engagement in the digital world (Hobbs & Jensen, 2022). Social The social media platforms most frequently used by respondents include Instagram and TikTok. Research by Jones (2018) highlights that platforms likesuch as Instagram and TikTok enable users to participate in the creator economy, enhancing their digital identity and self-expression (S. Jones & Park, 2018).

Furthermore, awareness of security and privacy is crucial for the community when <u>usingit uses</u> the internet. <u>Based onOn the basis of</u> survey results, most respondents occasionally update their privacy settings to ensure data security. Therefore, it is essential for society in this digital era to be vigilant about security and privacy to avoid data misuse. A theory suggests that awareness and actions regarding privacy settings indicate an understanding of the importance of personal data and digital security . <u>MeanwhileMoreover</u>, understanding harmful content is evident, as all respondents know how to report inappropriate or dangerous content. The community must be more intelligent and prudent in their digital activities. Expert opinions highlight that understanding reporting mechanisms is critical to digital citizenship literacy, promoting a safer and more responsible online ecosystem (von Gillern, Gould, et al., 2024).

Moreover, awareness and actions in digital activities show that most respondents are not very active in social campaigns or movements on social media. This lack of engagement is due to the low level of individual awareness, which stems from a lack of participation and understanding of social literacy. This aligns with expert theories that suggest that active participation in social media campaigns can enhance political awareness and civic engagement, whereas low participation may indicate a lack of understanding or interest in social issues (Loader & Mercea, 2011). observing-thisThus, the role of the community is crucial in providing accurate information in the digital world. Positive information dissemination can create a healthy and informative environment. The survey indicated that most respondents contribute by spreading accurate information in the digital environment. This suggests that the current community understands the importance of literacy as a critical skill required in this digital era. This aligns with theories explaining that spreading-the-spread-of accurate information is part of digital ethics and is crucial for creating a healthy and informative digital environment (Ihlebæk, 2018).

The researchers acknowledge that the study has several limitations and that further research is needed in various environments. For future research, there is a need to raiseincrease privacy awareness to enhanceincrease education on the importance of privacy settings and digital security. Additionally, social participation should be

encouraged to drive involvement in social campaigns to improve digital citizenship literacy. More educational and engaging content should also be created on platforms frequently used by Gen Z.

4. Final considerations

The significance of integrating digital citizenship education into modern learning frameworks has been strongly highlighted by the findings of this study. The emphasis on digital etiquette, critical evaluation of online information, and digital security is considered essential for equipping students with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of the digital age. It was Research has demonstrated by the research that young individuals, particularly those aged 15-25 years, exhibit varying levels of understanding regarding digital citizenship literacy, especially in the domains of technology application, responsibility, and leadership. To bridge the identified gaps, the development of targeted educational strategies is requiredneeded. Efforts to enhanceincrease privacy awareness and disseminate knowledge about digital security and privacy settings should be prioritized. Additionally, the promotion of community involvement through social campaigns is seen as a vital approach to improving digital citizenship literacy by fostering ethical and informed participation in digital spaces. The necessity for a transformation in education that surpasses traditional paradigms is underscored by the demands of the digital age. Innovative approaches are expected to be adopted by schools and educators to connect and foster the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for students to excel as competent digital citizens. These strategies are believed to not only empower individuals but also contribute to the establishment of a more ethical and responsible digital society.

Acknowledgment

This study was made possible through the contributions and support provided by various individuals and organizations. Appreciation <u>iswas</u> extended to the participants₇ aged 15-<u>2</u>5, whose insights and experiences were shared, enabling the exploration of digital citizenship literacy in this research. Gratitude is also expressed to the educators and institutions that facilitated the distribution of the survey and encouraged participation among their students. Their cooperation was instrumental in ensuring the collection of meaningful data for this study. AcknowledgmentAcknowledgments is given to colleagues and peers, who <u>offeredoffer</u> valuable feedback and guidance throughout the research process. The quality of this study was significantly enhanced by their expertise and support. <u>LastlyFinally</u>, recognition is given to <u>the-advancements</u> in digital technologies and <u>the-ongoing</u> discussions on digital citizenship, which <u>servedserve</u> as the inspiration for this research. This work is dedicated to initiatives aimed at fostering ethical, informed, and responsible digital engagement.

Ethical considerations

"Not applicable" Not applicable.

Conflict of Interestinterest

"The authors declare no conflicts of interest".

Funding

"This research did not receive any financial support".

Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the sample used may not fully represent the broader population, making the generalization limiting the generalizability of the results limited. Second, data collected through surveys and interviews may be influenced by respondent bias. Finally, limitations in time and resources may also affect the depth of analysis.

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