

ETHICS OF SOCIALIZED AS A NETIZEN IN THE ERA OF FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Muhammad Anwar Ramadhan¹

¹ Universitas Negeri Semarang
manwarr910@students.unnes.ac.id

Article Info

Article history:

Received May 13th, 2026

Revised Jul 13th, 2026

Accepted Aug 22th, 2026

Keywords:

digital citizenship; digital ethics;
Pancasila; digital literacy; Civic
Education

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the ethics of socializing as a netizen in an era of fundamental change in the digital world, emphasizing the importance of intelligent, ethical, and responsible digital citizenship. This research uses a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach through a literature review with relevant secondary data sources, such as books, journals, regulations, and reports from credible institutions. The results of the discussion indicate that rapid technological developments bring various challenges, including disinformation, hate speech, cyberbullying, polarization, and threats to privacy and personal data security. In facing these conditions, the values of Pancasila serve as a moral compass capable of maintaining national identity while shaping civilized digital behavior. In addition, Civic Education plays a strategic role in building digital literacy, fostering critical thinking, and shaping a young generation that is not only a user of technology, but also a producer of positive content in the digital space. Thus, strengthening digital ethics and internalizing Pancasila values are important steps towards creating a healthy, safe, and character-based internet ecosystem.



©2026 The Authors. Published by Edukarya. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has been massive since the early 20th century, fundamentally changing the paradigm of human interaction. The world is now in the grip of digital technology, making territorial boundaries between countries increasingly blurred, often referred to as a borderless world (Ohler, 2012). This phenomenon has given rise to a new space for social life known as cyberspace. In this space, every individual is no longer merely an administrative citizen in the physical world, but is also transformed into a digital citizen with access, participation, and influence at the global level.

However, the transition to a global digital society has not been without obstacles. Technological readiness, unmatched by ethical and literacy readiness, often triggers instability in the digital public sphere. The emergence of disinformation or hoaxes, hate speech, political polarization, and even violations of personal data privacy are clear evidence that many digital citizens do not yet understand their rights and obligations (Ribble, 2015). In the Indonesian context, this challenge is further complicated because the flow of global information often clashes with local values and Pancasila norms, which should serve as the primary filter for behavior in cyberspace.

The urgency of digital citizenship is no longer simply about the ability to operate devices, but rather about how individuals can participate intelligently, ethically, and responsibly. As part of the global community, digital citizens must recognize that every online activity has real legal and social impacts (RABIU, 2025). Ignorance of digital ethics not only harms individuals personally but can also damage a nation's reputation globally. Therefore, instilling digital citizenship values is a crucial pillar in maintaining national sovereignty in the era of digital disruption.

Civics Education (PKn) plays a strategic role in bridging the need for ideal citizen character amidst the maelstrom of digital globalization. PKn no longer merely addresses physical national defense, but also "Digital National Defense" through strong literacy and ethics. It is important to analyze the extent to which this concept of digital citizenship can be implemented in everyday life so that every individual can become an agent of positive change, rather than a source of conflict in the global world. Based on this thinking, this article will explore in depth the dynamics and challenges of digital citizenship in facing the complexities of today's global world.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive-analytical methods. The choice of a qualitative approach is based on the characteristics of the research topic, which relates to social phenomena, ethics, and citizen behavior in the digital space, which cannot be measured solely with numbers or statistics (quantitative). This approach allows researchers to conduct an in-depth exploration of the concept of digital citizenship and comprehensively understand the complexity of citizen interactions within the dynamics of the global world (Creswell, 2016).

Specifically, this research employs a library research method. According to Zed (2008), a library study is not merely a preparatory step to develop a research framework, but rather a data collection method that involves reviewing various literature relevant to the topic at hand. In this context, researchers collect, refine, and analyze ideas from various written sources to build a strong argument regarding the challenges and strategies of digital citizenship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Digital Citizenship in a Global Perspective

Digital citizenship is simply defined as norms of appropriate and responsible behavior related to the use of information technology (Ribble, 2015). However, from a global perspective, this concept extends beyond internet etiquette; it encompasses an individual's identity as part of a global community interconnected beyond physical boundaries. Being a global digital citizen means understanding that actions in cyberspace have resonances that extend beyond the jurisdiction of one's home country.

One of the most internationally recognized frameworks is Mike Ribble's nine elements of digital citizenship. These nine elements can be grouped into three main pillars for easier analysis in a global context:

1. Pillar of Respect (Respect Yourself / Respect Others)
 - a. Digital Etiquette: This is the standard of behavior or expected procedures in the digital world. Globally, the challenge is cultural differences. What is considered normal in one country may be considered offensive in another. Global digital citizens are required to have cultural intelligence to communicate inclusively.
 - b. Digital Access: Emphasizes full participation in the digital society. Globally, there is a digital divide, or gap in access. Digital citizenship promotes inclusiveness so that every individual, regardless of economic or geographic background, has an equal opportunity to connect.
 - c. Digital Law: Concerning legal ethics in cyberspace. This includes copyright protection, respect for intellectual property across borders, and the understanding that actions such as hacking or plagiarism are violations of universal law.
2. Pillars of Educate (Educate Yourself / Connect with Others)
 - a. Digital Communication: The electronic exchange of information. In a globalized world, communication occurs instantly across various platforms. The urgency of this element lies in the ability of digital citizens to select the right media and filter messages before sending them to a global audience.
 - b. Digital Literacy: The process of teaching and learning about technology and its uses. In this era of disruption, literacy is not just about technical matters, but also the ability to think critically to distinguish fact from opinion amidst the flood of international information.
 - c. Digital Commerce: The electronic buying and selling of goods and services. Cross-border transactions are now commonplace. Savvy digital citizens must understand the risks and ethics of global economic transactions to avoid fraud.
3. Pillar Protect (Protect Yourself / Protect Others)
 - a. Digital Rights & Responsibilities: Every digital citizen has the right to privacy and freedom of expression, but these rights are limited by the obligation not to violate the rights of others.
 - b. Digital Health & Wellness: Concerning physical and psychological well-being in the digital world, such as internet addiction or the impact on eye health.

- c. Digital Security: Electronic self-protection. In a globalized world, cyber threats are transnational, so awareness of personal data security is a form of national defense in cyberspace.

According to UNESCO (2015), a global perspective on digital citizenship does not mean erasing national identity. Instead, it demands that citizens become "National Ambassadors" in the digital space. For Indonesia, the nine elements mentioned above must be aligned with the values of Pancasila. For example, digital etiquette should not only adhere to global standards but also reflect the nation's friendly and civilized character, as embodied in the second principle of Pancasila. By understanding this concept deeply, students, as representatives of digital citizens, can position themselves appropriately within the increasingly complex dynamics of global digital civilization.

Global Challenges and Digital Ethics

Under the umbrella of digital globalization, human interaction is no longer limited by geographical boundaries. However, this interconnectedness brings with it a series of complex global challenges. The anonymous and massive digital space is often a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it accelerates the exchange of information, but on the other, it becomes a vehicle for the spread of negative impacts that escalate globally.

1. Global Challenges in the Digital Space

- a. Disinformation and Infodemic: One of the biggest challenges today is the spread of fake news (hoaxes) and organized disinformation. In a global context, disinformation can be used as a geopolitical tool to manipulate public opinion across countries (Derakhshan, 2017). An infodemic phenomenon occurs when excessive information (both true and false) spreads rapidly, making it difficult for the global community to find sources of truth, which can ultimately trigger social distrust and physical conflict.
- b. Transnational Cybercrime: Security challenges are no longer local. Phishing attacks, large-scale data breaches, and online fraud are now perpetrated by actors located on different continents than their victims. This creates complex legal challenges related to international jurisdiction and enforcement, requiring digital citizens to exercise heightened vigilance independently (Kshetri, 2010).
- c. Cultural Divide and Polarization: Global interactions bring together conflicting cultural backgrounds. Without a sound understanding, these differences often lead to cultural clashes and polarization on social media. The echo chamber phenomenon, where algorithms only present information that aligns with the user's views, further exacerbates fanaticism and closes off space for healthy dialogue among global citizens.

2. Digital Ethics as a Fundamental Solution

In the face of these challenges, digital ethics, or netiquette (network etiquette), has emerged as a crucial navigational tool. Ethics is not just about manners, but also about each individual's moral responsibility for the impact of the digital footprint they leave behind.

- a. Information Integrity and Honesty: Digital ethics require every citizen to verify information before sharing. This principle is crucial for breaking the chain of disinformation. Ethical digital citizens recognize that one false post can have a domino effect that harms thousands of people around the world.
- b. Respect for Privacy and Diversity: Global digital ethics emphasizes respect for the privacy of others and respect for differences of opinion. This includes refraining from cyberbullying, doxing, or hate speech against specific groups. In the global space, the ability to empathize digitally is the difference between constructive and destructive citizens.
- c. Responsibility for a Digital Footprint: Every online activity creates a lasting reputation. Digital ethics teaches that what we write today reflects our character in the future. In the global professional world, a digital footprint is an indicator of a person's integrity. Therefore, maintaining ethics is a form of social and professional investment for every digital citizen.

Global challenges cannot be solved with rigid legal regulations alone, as technology always advances faster than laws. Therefore, the final bulwark lies in the ethics internalized within every digital citizen. For Indonesian students, this global digital ethics embodies the values of "Just and Civilized Humanity." By prioritizing ethics, a digital citizen will not lose their identity even amidst the rapid flow of globalization.

Implementation of Pancasila Values in Digital Citizenship

Pancasila, as the philosophical foundation and leitmotif of the Indonesian nation, applies not only to the physical world but also to the moral foundation of the digital world. Amidst the currents of globalization that bring various external ideologies, Pancasila serves as a primary filter to ensure that Indonesian citizens do not lose their identity when interacting with the global community. The connection between digital citizenship and Pancasila can be explained through its five principles, as follows:

1. MarkDivinity and Digital Integrity (First Principle)

The principle of "Belief in the One and Only God" in the digital context emphasizes integrity and honesty. As devout digital citizens, individuals recognize that every activity in cyberspace, even though not directly visible to others, remains under God's supervision. This is demonstrated by a commitment to not spread slander (hoaxes), not commit online fraud, and respect the diversity of beliefs in global discussion forums (Lickona, 2022). Digital integrity is a form of worship in carrying out obligations as civilized citizens.

2. Digital Humanity and Empathy (Second Principle)

"Just and Civilized Humanity" is the foundation of global digital ethics. In a cyberspace that often feels cold and mechanical, humanitarian values demand digital empathy. This means recognizing that behind a computer or gadget screen is another human being with feelings and human rights. Concrete implementations of this principle include anti-cyberbullying movements, respect for others' privacy, and the use of polite language in cross-cultural communication (Winarno, 2019). Pancasila-based digital citizens are those who humanize others in cyberspace.

3. Unity and Digital Nationalism (Third Principle)

In a global world rife with polarization, the principle of "Indonesian Unity" is highly relevant. Indonesia's digital citizens play a role as ambassadors for the nation on the international stage. Every post and comment by Indonesian netizens reflects the nation's image. The third principle demands that citizens refrain from being provocateurs who divide their own nation or other nations. Instead, digital citizens must use technology to strengthen bonds of brotherhood, promote Indonesia's rich cultural heritage internationally, and counter all forms of propaganda that threaten the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

4. Wise Digital Democracy (Fourth Principle)

"Democracy Led by the Wisdom of Deliberation/Representation" translates into healthy political and social participation in the digital space. Digital citizenship demands that citizens express their opinions critically yet responsibly. The fourth principle teaches that deliberation and consensus in the digital world must prioritize rationality and wisdom, not incitement or simply following destructive viral trends (Kaelan, 2016). Respecting differing opinions in the comments section is a manifestation of mature digital democracy.

5. Digital Justice and Inclusivity (Fifth Principle)

The principle of "Social Justice for All Indonesians" relates to digital access and inclusivity. Just digital citizenship means striving for equal access to information for all levels of society, including those in remote areas. Furthermore, in the digital economy (digital commerce), this value is realized through honest, non-exploitative trade practices and support for local products so they can compete fairly in the global market.

The integration of Pancasila values into digital citizenship ensures that technological advancement does not lead to moral decadence. By using Pancasila as a compass, students will not only become technically proficient technology users but also digital citizens with spiritual depth, nobility of character, and love for their homeland. This is what distinguishes the character of Indonesian citizens among the diverse digital citizens of the world.

Case Analysis of Digital Citizen Behavior: Reflections and Reality

An analysis of the behavior of digital citizens on the global stage provides an objective picture of the extent to which digital citizenship values have been internalized. While technology provides space for positive collaboration, it also reveals character vulnerabilities that need to be addressed.

1. CaseNegative: Low Digital Civility Index (DCI) of Indonesian Netizens

One case that garnered global attention was Microsoft's 2020 Digital Civility Index (DCI) report. The report ranked Indonesian netizens at the bottom of Southeast Asia's digital civility rankings (Microsoft, 2021). This low ranking was driven by high rates of cyberbullying, hate speech, and online fraud.

Analysis:

This case demonstrates a disconnect between real-world and digital behavior. Indonesians, known for their friendliness in the physical world, experience a "character shift" behind the anonymity of a screen (Suler, 2004). This constitutes a violation of the Respect Others pillar in the Ribble element and a deviation from the Second Principle of Pancasila. The underlying cause is believed to be a lack of understanding that digital space is a public space with the same social consequences as physical space. The phenomenon of Indonesian netizens "attacking" international accounts during disputes demonstrates that uncontrolled nationalism can turn into digital aggression that harms the nation's image in the eyes of the world.

2. Positive Cases: Digital Activism and Global Solidarity (Crowdfunding)

On the positive side, Indonesia's digital citizens have also demonstrated extraordinary strength in terms of digital solidarity and activism. Platforms like Kitabisa, or participation in global movements like humanitarian fundraising for international crises, demonstrate that digital citizenship can be used for noble purposes.

Analysis:

This activity reflects the successful implementation of the Fifth Principle of Pancasila (Social Justice) and the Second Principle (Humanity). The ability of digital citizens to organize themselves collectively without geographical barriers to help others demonstrates a level of digital literacy that has gone beyond technical aspects and entered the realm of empathy and social action. From a global perspective, this demonstrates that Indonesia's digital citizens have great potential to become leaders in the digital humanitarian movement if their energies are directed towards constructive causes.

3. Case Disinformation: The Challenge of Critical Reasoning in the Post-Truth Era

The spread of hoaxes related to global health issues or international politics is often taken for granted by some digital citizens. This issue often arises in closed communication groups (such as WhatsApp) and then spills over onto public platforms.

Analysis:

The main problem in this case is low information literacy. Digital citizens often share information based on emotions (such as fear or anger) rather than logic. This shows that technological sophistication has not been accompanied by independent critical thinking. In the context of civics, this challenges the Fourth Principle, which emphasizes that wisdom in handling information is key to a healthy digital democracy. Without critical thinking, digital citizens will only become tools for the interests of certain parties seeking to divide global unity.

Strategy for Strengthening Digital Literacy through Civic Education

Strengthening digital literacy should not be viewed solely as a technical effort to improve device operational capabilities, but rather as an effort to transform cognitive and character. In a global context, this strengthening strategy must be able to create citizens who are not only digitally smart but also digitally wise. Here are some key strategies that can be implemented:

1. Curriculum Reorientation: Integration of Digital Civics in Civics

The first strategic step is to reorient the Civics curriculum by integrating the concept of Digital Civics. Civics in higher education must be able to bridge classical civics theory with digital realities. Students need to be equipped with materials on digital human rights, cyber jurisdiction, and digital diplomacy (Lisa M Jones, 2016). By understanding that they are part of a global entity, students will be more cautious in their actions, realizing that every click and keystroke represents the nation's digital sovereignty.

2. Developing Critical Thinking Independence

The second strategy focuses on honing critical thinking skills to address the post-truth phenomenon. Digital citizens must be equipped with the ability to independently verify data and fact-check. Education should teach methods for identifying information sources, recognizing algorithmic bias, and understanding the motives behind disinformation. This independent thinking is the most effective

"digital immunization" in countering the spread of hoaxes and propaganda that can undermine national unity and global stability (Renee, 2010).

3. Instilling Digital Ethics Based on Pancasila Values

Technological sophistication without morality will only lead to destruction. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy must be accompanied by the internalization of ethics rooted in the values of Pancasila. This strategy is implemented through a case-based learning approach, where students are invited to analyze ethical dilemmas in cyberspace and find solutions based on the principles of humanity and justice. The goal is that ethics should not be merely memorized but rather become a compass that guides citizens' automatic behavior while surfing the internet.

4. Building a Collaborative Ecosystem (Multi-Stakeholder Synergy)

Strengthening digital literacy cannot be achieved by educational institutions alone. Synergy is needed between the government (as the regulator), families (as the smallest educational unit), and civil society. The government needs to ensure that regulations such as the ITE Law function educationally, not merely punitively. Meanwhile, universities can play a role through community service activities to spread the spirit of digital literacy to wider levels of society, thereby narrowing the literacy gap between the younger and older generations (Bawden, 2008).

5. Encouraging Positive Content Production as a Form of National Defense

The final strategy is to shift the paradigm of digital citizens from mere consumers to producers of positive content. High digital literacy must culminate in the ability to produce constructive narratives, promote peace, and introduce the nation's cultural excellence to the global stage. From a global perspective, filling the digital space with inspiring and educational content is a concrete form of national defense in the modern era. This will automatically suppress the spread of negative and destructive content.

CONCLUSION

Digital citizenship in the global era demands not only technical skills but also a moral commitment to ethical, safe, and responsible behavior in cyberspace. Challenges such as disinformation, polarization, and the character crisis demonstrate the gap between technological development and the maturity of society's digital literacy. In this context, the values of Pancasila remain relevant as an ethical compass for maintaining national identity amidst globalization. Civics Education (PKn) plays a crucial role in shaping a young generation with digital literacy, critical thinking, and the ability to create positive content as a contribution to the nation. The success of digital citizenship depends on the synergy between technological mastery and character development.

REFERENCES

- Bawden, D. (2008). *Origins and Concepts of Digital Literacy*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Choi, M. K. (2018). Development of Youth Digital Citizenship Scale and Implications for Educational Settings. *Educational Technology & Society*, 155-171.
- Creswell, J. W. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. United States of America: Sage publications.
- Derakhshan, C. W. (2017). *Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policymaking*. Strasbourg: the Council of Europe.
- Kaelan, H. (2016). *Civic Education for Higher Education*. Yogyakarta: PARADIGMA.
- Kshetri, N. (2010). *The global cybercrime industry: economic, institutional and strategic perspectives*. Greensboro: Springer.
- Lickona, T. (2022). *Educating for Character*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Lisa M Jones, K. J. (2016). *Defining and Measuring Youth Digital Citizenship*. New media & society.
- Matthew B. Miles, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Microsoft. (2021). *Civility, Safety, and Interaction Online*. Asia-Pacific: Microsoft.
- Ohler, J. B. (2012). *Digital Community, Digital Citizen*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- RABIU, A. A. (2025). ETHICS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: EXPLORING THE ETHICAL CHALLENGES OF TECHNOLOGY. *Journal of Information Systems and DigitalTechnologies*.
- Rachman, A. (2016). *QUANTITATIVE, QUALITATIVE AND R&D RESEARCH METHODS*. Bandung: Saba Jaya Publisher.
- Renee, H. (2010). *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action*. A White Paper on the Digital and Media Literacy Recommendations of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy. United States: The Aspen Institute.
- Ribble, M. (2015). *Digital Citizenship in Schools*. Washington DC: International Society for Technology in Education.
- Segerberg, W. L. (2023). *The logic of connective action: digital media and the personalization of contentious politics*. Political Science and Public Policy: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Suler, J. (2004). The online disinhibition effect. *CYBERPSYCHOLOGY & BEHAVIOR*.
- Thomas, L. (2021). *Digital Civility Index (DCI)*. Asia-Pacific: Microsoft.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Global Citizenship Education: Topics and Learning Objectives*. Asia-Pacific: UNESCO.
- Wardle, C. (2019). *FIRST DRAFT'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING* . FirstDraft.
- Winarno, D. (2019). *New Paradigm of Civic Education*. East Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.
- Zed, M. (2008). *Library research methods*. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Zuboff, S. (2023). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*. New York: Routledge.