

Media Literacy and Digital Citizenship in the Era of Social Media

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Abstract

The advent of social media platforms has revolutionized the way individuals consume and interact with information, highlighting the pressing need for media literacy and digital citizenship skills. This journal article aims to provide an in-depth exploration of the intricate relationship between media literacy, digital citizenship, and social media in the modern era. Drawing upon a comprehensive review of existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and empirical research, this study offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities presented by social media platforms for media literacy and digital citizenship education. The article begins by elucidating the concepts of media literacy and digital citizenship, their interconnections, and their significance in the context of social media. It highlights how social media has transformed the media landscape, enabling the rapid dissemination of information, facilitating citizen journalism, and fostering participatory culture. To address these challenges, the article delves into a theoretical framework that informs media literacy and digital citizenship in the social media era. It explores the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of media literacy, emphasizing critical thinking, information verification, source evaluation, and media production skills as crucial components. Furthermore, the article discusses the essential elements of digital citizenship, including responsible ethical participation, digital rights, and digital footprints. The study also provides a comprehensive analysis of current pedagogical practices and strategies employed to promote media literacy and digital citizenship within the social media context. Moreover, it investigates the effectiveness of media literacy curricula, digital literacy campaigns, and online safety programs. In conclusion, this journal article underscores the critical importance of media literacy and digital citizenship in the era of social media. It provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by social media platforms, highlighting the necessity of equipping individuals with the necessary skills to navigate and critically engage

with digital media. By fostering media literacy and digital citizenship competencies, society can empower individuals to become responsible and informed participants in the digital world, thereby promoting a more inclusive, democratic, and ethical media ecosystem.

Keywords: Media Literacy, Digital Citizenship, Media Ecosystem

Introduction

In an era dominated by the omnipresent influence of social media, the intertwining dynamics of media literacy and digital citizenship have become subjects of paramount significance. The digital landscape has evolved into a vast, interconnected ecosystem where information dissemination and communication are largely mediated by social media platforms. This transformation has redefined not only how we access and share information but also how we engage with it. As we navigate this intricate web of virtual reality and factual ambiguity, the concept of digital citizenship has risen to the forefront of societal discourse. At its core, digital citizenship encompasses the ability to participate in this digital world with discernment, critical thinking, and ethical responsibility. It involves not merely the act of being online but the skilful and responsible navigation of the digital space, all while upholding democratic values and promoting civic engagement. Media literacy, on the other hand, lies at the heart of our ability to make sense of the torrents of information that inundate us daily. It encompasses a range of competencies, from the ability to evaluate the credibility of sources to recognizing the techniques used in media manipulation. This article endeavours to unravel the intricate relationship between media literacy and digital citizenship in the social media era, delving deep into the nuanced ways in which these two concepts interact and shape each other. As we grapple with information overload, filter bubbles, and the pervasive spread of misinformation, the importance of understanding how media literacy influences the cultivation of responsible digital citizens cannot be overstated. This exploration seeks to shed light on the multifaceted effects of media literacy on digital citizenship, offering valuable insights that are indispensable as we collectively strive to navigate the complexities of our digitally connected world.

Media literacy refers to the ability to access, critically evaluate, and create media content effectively. Digital citizenship, on the other hand, encompasses the responsible and ethical use of digital technologies and online platforms. In this era of information overload, media literacy plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to navigate the vast landscape of social media. It empowers users to critically analyse and evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and bias of information encountered online. Media literacy also involves understanding the algorithms and mechanisms that drive social media platforms, enabling users to make informed choices about the content they consume and share. The goal of media education is to promote growth in the areas of media processes, techniques, nature, and affects, as well as the capacity to choose information and content appropriately. The notion of educating users here highlights the need for sensible and effective media management. The relationship between media information and users, as well as alternative media creations, are critically analysed in literacy education. This is a major factor in the development of new and creative educational approaches and the transformational effects of technology on media (Huda, 2022). While, the importance of media literacy also can be seen in the context of the reliability of a person especially in combating the essence of what has been showcased over social media. Offering opportunities for people to develop a new set of skills and abilities is a major role of media literacy education. This project aims to facilitate the management of

information use through the use of digital technology to create audiovisual content (Buckingham, 2013)

Digital citizenship refers to the potential for a new or distinct kind of citizenship that arises when people use the internet's opportunities and limitations. It alludes to new opportunities for citizenship both inside and outside of our geographically defined boundaries and in cyberspace. (Marie Heath, 2020). While, digital citizenship, in the context of social media, extends beyond personal responsibility and ethical behaviour. It encompasses issues such as online privacy, cyberbullying, digital footprints, and the rights and responsibilities of individuals in digital spaces. Developing digital citizenship skills is essential for creating safe, inclusive, and respectful online environments. For kids and teenagers, it can have detrimental repercussions on their social lives, academic performance, and mental health, among other things. According to studies, people who are the targets of cyberstalking are more likely to experience anxiety, sadness, and even suicidal thoughts. Cybercrime can also have detrimental effects on people and businesses, including monetary losses, harm to one's reputation, and legal ramifications. (Hosam A. Althibyani, 2023). It seeks to explore innovative approaches, best practices, and theoretical frameworks that enhance media literacy skills and promote responsible digital citizenship. By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and providing a platform for the exchange of ideas, the research seeks to contribute to the development of effective strategies, policies, and educational initiatives that enhance media literacy and promote responsible digital citizenship. It aspires to be a valuable resource for researchers, educators, policymakers, and practitioners dedicated to addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities presented by social media in the digital era.

Research Objectives

To address the needs identified, researcher aims to explore the following overarching objectives:

RO1: To study the characteristics of media literacy and effects of digital citizenship.

RO2: To identify the relationship between media literacy skills and its effects towards digital citizenship practices.

Literature Review

The emergence and rise of social media

The advent and widespread adoption of social media have revolutionized the way people communicate, share information, and connect globally. Over the past two decades, social media platforms have grown from niche online communities to integral components of modern life, profoundly impacting various aspects of society, including communication, business, politics, and culture. This literature review explores the rise of social media by examining key themes, trends, and insights from scholarly research.

The rise of social media platforms has significantly transformed the media landscape, providing individuals with unprecedented access to information, communication, and participation. Social media has become a primary source of news and information for a large segment of the population. Research highlights the role of platforms like Twitter in breaking news stories and their potential to shape public opinion. However, concerns about the spread of misinformation and filter bubbles have also been raised (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). However, this new era of social media also brings forth numerous challenges, including the proliferation of misinformation, privacy concerns, online harassment, and the potential for digital divides. In response to these challenges, media literacy and digital citizenship have

emerged as critical concepts and practices to navigate the complex digital media environment. Privacy and ethical issues have emerged alongside the rise of social media. Researchers have examined the collection and use of personal data by social media companies, as well as the ethical implications of algorithms and content moderation (Barocas, Hardt, & Narayanan, 2019). This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of existing research, theoretical frameworks, and empirical studies pertaining to media literacy and digital citizenship in the context of social media.

Media literacy encompasses the cognitive, emotional, and social skills required to critically analyse, evaluate, and create media content. Digital citizenship, on the other hand, encompasses responsible and ethical engagement with digital technologies and online communities. The review highlights the interconnections between media literacy and digital citizenship and their relevance in the social media era. The rise of social media has been a defining characteristic of the 21st century, reshaping how individuals communicate, access information, conduct business, engage in politics, and perceive themselves and others. While social media has brought numerous benefits, including enhanced connectivity and opportunities for expression, it has also raised important concerns, such as the spread of misinformation, privacy violations, and mental health implications. As social media continues to evolve, ongoing research is necessary to understand its multifaceted impact on society fully.

Social Media and Media Literacy

The integration of social media into our daily lives has led to a significant shift in the way individuals consume, create, and share information. The intersection of social media and media literacy has become a critical area of study, as it raises important questions about how individuals navigate the digital landscape, evaluate information, and engage with media content. This literature review explores the relationship between social media and media literacy, highlighting key themes, research findings, and emerging trends in this evolving field. Media literacy, traditionally defined as the ability to critically analyse and interpret media content, has gained renewed importance in the digital age. The proliferation of social media platforms has made media literacy skills essential for discerning between credible and unreliable sources, identifying bias, and understanding the impact of media on society (Livingstone & Third, 2017). Apart from that, social media that is widely used across the world also can give the Challenges of Misinformation and Disinformation. This simply as when there are loads of search that can be profound, some data can be misaccurately. Social media platforms have become breeding grounds for misinformation and disinformation. Research has shown that false or misleading information spreads rapidly through social networks, posing challenges to media literacy efforts. Studies have examined the role of social media in amplifying misinformation and explored strategies to combat it (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Another cause of the relationship between social media and media literacy is that it can create a gap between the user. This can cause user-generated content and media literacy. The rise of user-generated content on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok presents unique challenges and opportunities for media literacy. Users often create and share content that blurs the lines between entertainment and factual information. Research has explored how individuals evaluate and engage with user-generated content, as well as its impact on their beliefs and behaviours (Lewandowsky et al., 2020). Besides, the relationship also creates a wider gap towards critical thinking. Media literacy has expanded to encompass digital literacy and critical thinking skills. Social media platforms require users to navigate a complex digital

landscape, from understanding privacy settings to recognizing online manipulation tactics. Researchers are examining the role of digital and critical thinking skills in promoting responsible social media use (Ribble, 2017). The relationship between social media and media literacy is a dynamic and evolving area of research. As social media continues to shape how information is produced, disseminated, and consumed, media literacy becomes an essential tool for individuals to navigate the digital landscape responsibly. This literature review highlights the key themes and challenges in this field, emphasizing the importance of ongoing research and educational initiatives to promote media literacy in the age of social media.

H1: High media literacy skills will influence high digital citizenship practices.

H2: High media literacy effect will influence high digital citizenship practices.

Conceptual and theoretical framing

Media literacy theory is a well-established framework that enables individuals to critically assess, analyse, and navigate the complex world of media messages and technologies. This theory emphasizes the development of essential skills and competencies to become informed and responsible consumers of media content (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993). Drawing upon various academic disciplines, media literacy theory provides a structured approach to understanding the pervasive influence of media in modern society and equips individuals to engage with media messages in a thoughtful and discerning manner. The theory of media literacy provides a conceptual framework for understanding how individuals interact with and make sense of media messages. It encompasses a range of theoretical perspectives and models that guide research, practice, and education in the field of media literacy. By exploring the theory of media literacy, we can gain insights into the cognitive, emotional, and social processes involved in media consumption, interpretation, and production.

One fundamental aspect of media literacy theory is its emphasis on critical analysis. According to (Jenkins, 2008), media literacy encourages individuals to question and deconstruct media messages, examining their construction, intentions, and underlying biases. By engaging in critical analysis, individuals can uncover hidden agendas and identify manipulative techniques used by media creators. Another key element of media literacy theory is the recognition of the media's significant impact on society. It also highlights how media literacy theory explores the ways in which media shape's public opinion, influences behaviours, and contributes to the construction of social norms (Livingstone and Third, 2017). This understanding enables individuals to be aware of the potential effects of media exposure and make informed choices regarding media consumption. Media representations refer to how individuals, groups, events, and social issues are portrayed in media content. Media literacy theory emphasizes the examination of stereotypes, biases, and misrepresentations that can shape public perceptions and influence attitudes and behaviours. Media literacy theory acknowledges the influence of media on individuals and society. It explores the ways in which media can shape beliefs, values, and behaviours, while also recognizing that individuals have agency and can actively engage with media messages.

Media literacy theory also underscores the importance of developing specific skills. It emphasizes that media literacy involves critical thinking, information evaluation, and media production skills (Hobbs, 2010). These competencies empower individuals to assess the credibility of media sources, discern between fact and fiction, and even create their own media content. Furthermore, media literacy theory regards media as cultural artifacts, reflecting the values and beliefs of a society. As Buckingham (2003) argues, media literacy

enables individuals to analyse media content within its cultural context. By doing so, individuals can gain insights into the broader cultural forces that shape media messages. Media literacy theory also recognizes the educational dimension of its principles. According to Potter (2010), media literacy education aims to integrate media literacy into formal and informal learning environments, such as schools and community organizations. This educational approach equips individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the media landscape effectively. Media literacy theory has practical applications in various domains, including education, media production, policy-making, and advocacy. In educational settings, it informs the development of curricula, instructional strategies, and assessment methods to enhance individuals' media literacy skills. Media literacy theory also guides media production professionals in creating responsible and ethical media content that reflects diverse perspectives and avoids stereotypes. In policy-making and advocacy, media literacy theory supports the development of guidelines, regulations, and initiatives to promote media literacy education and empower individuals to critically engage with media messages. Overall, the theory of media literacy provides a foundation for understanding the complexities of media engagement, empowering individuals to become informed, critical, and responsible consumers and creators of media content.

Lastly, media literacy theory is not static but continually evolving. It emphasizes the need for individuals to adapt their media literacy skills to keep pace with the ever-changing media technologies and platforms (Jenkins, 2006). This adaptive aspect ensures that media literacy remains relevant in a rapidly evolving media landscape. In conclusion, media literacy theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the critical role of media in contemporary society and equips individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to engage with media messages intelligently and responsibly. It draws from a wide range of scholarly perspectives and encourages critical analysis, skill development, and cultural awareness in the realm of media consumption and production.

Research design and methodology

Sample and Statistical Procedure

A cross-sectional, online survey was conducted randomly among undergraduate students during the first week of June 2022. There are about 646 full-time students (392 from Diploma and 254 from Degree) of Communication and Media Studies in UiTM Rembau (Student Information Management System, 2022). A size of 248 respondents as a sample should be an appropriate minimum for this population (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). The researcher used a simple random sampling technique where every member in the population has an equal chance being selected for this study. All students from Diploma and Degree students were given a link by the respective lecturers through WhatsApp group. The data collection process took about three months. In total, 241 online questionnaires were administered via Google form during the study. The data were coded, entered, and analysed using SPSS version 23. The researcher used descriptive analysis to measure the sum, percentage, mean and standard deviant. Meanwhile, a multiple regression analysis was also conducted to measure the relationship between media literacy and digital citizenship among students.

Research Instruments and reliability

The instruments used were adapted from past research studies on media literacy and digital citizenship and past literature review. A 22-item survey instrument was adopted and distributed online to undergraduate students. The questions also included demographic

items. Respondents were asked about a) media literacy skills b) digital citizenship practices, and c) media literacy's effects. Table 1 shows the allocation of instruments, items, and the reliability test. The instruments were adopted by (add researchers' names and year). The items measured using four Likert scales.

Before the questionnaires are distributed to the students, researchers seek help from the experts to confirm that the items of an assessment or instrument are appropriate to the targeted study and objectives. The pre-test had been conducted among 30 Diploma students. Meanwhile, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of a) media literacy skills b) digital citizenship practices, and c) media literacy's effects. The results of the reliability analysis were presented in Table 1 to show that the reliability test is met after some adjustments or reworded have been made to avoid misunderstanding when the respondents attempted the questionnaire. Meanwhile the Skewness and Kurtosis test were used to check on the normality test and the results showed that skewness between -2 and +2 and kurtosis between -7 to +7 is consistent with a normal distribution (Hair et al. (2010) and Bryne (2010). Thus, the sample data in this study *has been* drawn from a normally distributed population.

Table 1: Allocation of instrument, questions, and reliability

Instrument	Source/Instruments	No of Item/questions	Cronbach's alpha Pre-Test (n=30)	Mean (SD)	Cronbach's alpha Field Test (n=241)	Mean (SD)
media literacy skills	Akshaya et al., (2020)	6 (Likert Scale)	.87	19.3 (3.14)	.89	19 (3.24)
digital citizenship practices	Mahmoud E. Elrggal et al., (2018)	7 (Likert Scale)	.84	24.5 (2.67)	.90	23.9 (3.56)
media literacy's effects	Zhong BL et al., (2020).	8 (Likert Scale)	.94	26.5 (3.57)	.93	26.2 (3.96)

Results

The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2. Overall, male students stated 108 and female 133. Most of the age range was between 20 to 22 (73%), followed by age 18-19 (16%) and 23-25 (10%). Most of the students were among the Diploma programmed (87%). Majority of them used more than two applications (50%) and used social media daily (96%)

Table 2: Demographics and characteristics of students (n=241)

Item		Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	108 (45)
	Female	133 (55)
Age	<19	38 (16)
	20-22	177 (73)
	23-25	24 (10)

	>26	2 (1)
Programme	Diploma	210 (87)
	Degree	31 (13)
Number of social media platforms used.	1-2 applications	19 (8)
	3-4 applications	121 (50)
	More than 4 applications	101 (42)
Frequency of social media usage	Daily	231 (96)
	Weekly	10 (4)
	Monthly	0

Table 3: Descriptive Results of Media Literacy Skills, Media Literacy Effect and Digital Citizenship Practices (n=241)

Item	Mean	SD
MS1: Able to understand how media representations influence public perceptions on stereotypes	3.36	.69
MS2: Able to distinguish between reliable sources of information on social media.	3.22	.66
MS3: Able to possess the necessary skills to create and share media content effectively.	3.16	.71
MS4: Able to critically analyse media messages for bias.	3.11	.59
MS5: Confident to verify the accuracy of information on social media.	3.09	.73
MS6: Able to critically analyse and evaluate media messages for accuracy.	3.07	.62
Overall mean for MS	3.12	
ME1: Media literacy contributes to responsible digital citizenship.	3.38	.59
ME2: Media literacy enhances individuals' ability to critically evaluate digital content.	3.32	.58
ME3: Media literacy influences individuals' online identities in engaging positive digital interactions.	3.23	.66
ME4: Strategies or interventions used to enhance media literacy skills can foster positive digital citizenship.	3.30	.61
ME5: Media literacy education can mitigate the negative effects of digital manipulation on digital citizenship.	3.29	.60
ME6: Media literacy plays a significant role in increasing individuals' awareness of online privacy and security	3.27	.65
ME7: Media literacy's education promotes ethical behaviour of digital rights in the context of digital citizenship.	3.25	.56
ME8: Media literacy's education positively influences individuals' understanding of digital citizenship.	3.21	.60

Overall mean for MLE	3.28	
DC1: Able to understand the importance of protecting the personal information.	3.55	.59
DC2: Aware of the potential risks associated with appropriate precautions.	3.52	.64
DC3: Aware of the potential risks associated with online interactions.	3.52	.59
DC4: Able to understand the importance of protecting the online privacy.	3.50	.61
DC5: Able to engage in respectful communication on social media platforms.	3.41	.63
DC6: Able to know the ethical implications of using digital media	3.27	.65
DC7: Able to actively participate in online discussions related to societal issues.	3.10	.77
Overall mean for DC	3.41	

MS= Media Literacy Skills, ME= Media Literacy Effects, DC= Digital Citizenship Practices

Standard multiple regression was used to answer Hypothesis 1 and 2. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. Both Media Literacy Skills (MS) and Media Literacy Effect (ME) as shown in Table 4 have a positive and significant effect on Digital Citizenship Practices (DC). Overall, the model was significant, $F(2,238) = 208.97$, $p < 0.001$, explaining 63% ($R^2 = .63$) of the variance in the outcome variable (DC). Thus, table 4 shows that all independent variables of the study reported positive and have a significant effect on the DC. Therefore H_1 , and H_2 are supported. Of these two variables, ME makes the largest unique contribution ($\beta = 0.52$), although MS also made a statistically significant contribution ($\beta = 0.36$).

Table 4: Hypotheses and Results

Variables	Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig	R ²	F
	Beta				
Constant		4.08	.00**	.63	208.97
Media Literacy Skills (MS)	.36	7.30	.00**		
Media Literacy Effect (ME)	.52	10.6	.00**		

**P<0.001

Discussion

Looking at the study of media literacy and digital citizenship in the era of social media, the results of the study found that higher digital literacy profoundly had a greater effect of providing the understanding of digital citizenship. Many of these respondents are convinced that media literacy provides advantages towards digital citizenship. This is supported by Berthon et al (2012), which show that online social networking tends to enhance these benefits, as consumers are able to communicate more proactively. What is also interesting is that almost half of the respondents said that their children can develop their technological competence while using digital media as a home-based learning platform and almost half of the respondents agreed that students are able to spend time online learning without parental

assistance. This means that the online learning approach in children's education can also educate new knowledge and mastery the use of digital technology which is growing rapidly nowadays. However, this study found that almost half of the respondents disagreed that home-based learning enhances child experience as well as communication skills. Respondents identified that it was less and more difficult to communicate online during the class than in the actual class. Although it is good for the skills and competency of digital media use among students, communication skills are limited due to not being able to face the teachers physically.

In addition, the involvement of parents with students while using digital media as a home-based learning tool during lockdown was also given attention by the researchers. Researchers see parents as highly disciplined toward their child's learning. Nearly half of the respondents reported they were fully involved during their child's online learning. The frequency of parents monitoring child attention in online classes and taking notice of the school tasks is very high and gives the meaning of full involvement in children's online learning. At the same time, respondents were asked about their support for the child's realization tasks. Most of the respondents supported the tasks assigned to students well.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research article has provided valuable insights into the effects of media literacy and digital citizenship in the context of the social media era. Our findings highlight the increasingly critical role that these two factors play in shaping individuals' experiences and interactions within the digital landscape. As social media continues to evolve and permeate all aspects of our lives, media literacy and digital citizenship have emerged as essential tools for navigating this complex digital environment. Media literacy empowers individuals to critically assess and analyze the information they encounter online, enabling them to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources, identify potential biases, and make informed decisions about the content they consume and share. In an era where misinformation and disinformation thrive, media literacy is a crucial defense against the spread of false information and the polarization of online communities.

Digital citizenship, on the other hand, emphasizes responsible and ethical behavior in the digital realm. It encourages individuals to be respectful, kind, and empathetic in their online interactions, fostering a more positive and inclusive digital environment. Furthermore, digital citizenship promotes the protection of personal information, privacy, and cybersecurity, ensuring that individuals can engage with social media platforms safely and securely. The interplay between media literacy and digital citizenship is evident in their collective impact on society. Together, they equip individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to be discerning, responsible, and ethical digital citizens. By fostering a culture of critical thinking and responsible online behavior, media literacy and digital citizenship contribute to the creation of a healthier and more constructive digital space. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of media literacy and digital citizenship initiatives may vary depending on the context, age group, and specific social media platforms. Future research should continue to explore best practices for promoting media literacy and digital citizenship, taking into account the evolving nature of social media and digital technologies.

In conclusion, the findings of this research underscore the importance of integrating media literacy and digital citizenship education into our digital lives. By doing so, we can empower individuals to harness the positive potential of social media while mitigating its potential negative consequences, ultimately working towards a more informed, responsible, and

inclusive digital society.

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