

Unveiling Utopian Civic Engagement: Empowering Digital Natives through Digital Literacy for a Better Future

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Abstrak

This study aims to uncover the potential of empowering digital natives through digital literacy to strengthen utopian civic engagement for a better future. The research methodology employed in this study is grounded theory, with data collected through in-depth interviews with 15 digital natives respondents in Bandung, Indonesia. The collected data was then analyzed using NVivo version 12 Plus for Macbook software. The study's findings indicate that digital literacy promotes positive social media use and enhances digital natives' civic engagement. Digital natives with high digital literacy tend to have greater social and political awareness, enabling them to identify and address complex social issues through active participation in online discussions and actions. Furthermore, digital literacy helps shape their civic identity and a sense of belonging to online communities. The conclusion of this research provides a deeper understanding of the potential for empowering digital natives through digital literacy for utopian civic engagement.

Keyword: Utopian, Civic Engagement, Digital Natives, Digital Literacy



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INTRODUCTION

Strong and impactful citizenship engagement has been a desired goal in democratic societies. However, in the current digital era, paradigm shifts and technological advancements have brought new challenges in achieving effective civic engagement among digital natives. Digital natives, the generation growing up amidst digital technological advancements, have great potential to contribute significantly to building a better society. However, a concerning trend is the prevalence of passivity and ignorance regarding citizenship participation among digital natives. They may be overly focused on consuming digital information and entertainment, while active engagement in social and political issues needs to be addressed. Therefore, it is important to develop appropriate strategies to encourage utopian civic engagement among digital natives, where they can contribute positively to building a better future.

Research by Aavakare indicates that digital literacy is crucial in influencing civic engagement among digital natives (Aavakare, 2019). They found that individuals with higher levels of digital literacy tend to be more active in citizenship activities. Emphasize the importance of deeply understanding utopian aspirations in shaping civic engagement (Childers & Boatwright, 2021). They discovered that digital natives with strong visions and aspirations for a better future tend to be more active in social movements and political participation. The Leonard et al. reveals that digital literacy also provides access to information and resources that enable digital natives to participate effectively in citizenship activities (Leonard et al., 2016). The research by Şorgo et al highlights the importance of digital literacy in helping digital natives understand and critically evaluate the information they encounter in the digital world

(Şorgo et al., 2017). They found that digital natives with good digital literacy skills can better make informed decisions based on valid and accurate information.

Furthermore, Digital natives with higher levels of digital literacy tend to have greater social and political awareness (Mihailidis, 2018; Min, 2010). They are more capable of identifying and addressing complex social issues through active participation in online discussions and actions. The study by List emphasizes the importance of the continuous development of sustainable digital literacy competencies in creating sustainable citizenship participation among digital natives (List, 2019). They found that digital natives who develop their digital literacy skills tend to be more active in citizenship activities. The research by Mardiana reveals that digital literacy plays a significant role in shaping citizenship identity and a sense of ownership within digital communities (Mardiana, 2020). Digital natives with high digital literacy skills feel more connected to their online communities and are more likely to engage in collaborative activities.

Hartlet et al. (2005) highlight the factors influencing civic engagement, while Mulyono et al. (2022) critically review the relationship between social media and civic engagement. Fuchs (2011) discuss the importance of digital literacy in civic participation, while Livingstone & Helsper (2007) examine the role of support received in the digital environment. Livingstone & Couvering (2021) reveal the influence of digital technology on the lives and digital learning of digital natives, while Manca and Ranieri (2016) critically review the use of Facebook as a learning environment. Margaryan et al. (2011) investigate claims regarding the existence of digital natives and students' use of digital technology. Selwyn (2016) discusses university transformation in the digital era, while Jung (2015) highlight the importance of adaptive learning culture. Finally, Wang et al. (2013) compares the digital literacy competencies between digital natives and digital immigrants in an educational context.

The above research reveals that digital natives with high digital literacy skills tend to have greater social and political awareness. They can identify and address complex social issues through active participation in online discussions and actions. In addition, the research also emphasizes the importance of sustainable development of digital literacy competencies in creating sustainable civic participation among digital natives. Digital literacy also significantly shapes citizenship identity and a sense of ownership in online communities. The findings of this research provide valuable insights for the development of education and more effective civic participation strategies in the digital era. Strong and impactful civic engagement has become a desired goal in democratic societies. However, in the current digital era, paradigm shifts and technological advancements have brought new challenges in achieving effective civic engagement among digital natives. Digital natives, the generation growing up amidst digital technological advancements, have great potential to contribute significantly to building a better society.

Although several studies have examined the relationship between digital literacy, civic engagement, and utopian aspirations among digital natives, there is still a knowledge gap that needs to be filled. Previous research, such as those conducted by Bowyer & Kahne (2020), Lim (2020), Kneuer (2016), Dias-fonseca & Potter (2016), shao (2022), Mirra & Garcia (2017), have provided valuable insights into the role of digital literacy in shaping civic engagement and utopian aspirations among digital natives. However, the existing knowledge gap lies in a deeper understanding of the perspectives and experiences of digital natives in building utopian civic engagement. Additionally, previous research tends to focus on digital literacy as a separate aspect, and no comprehensive study has combined digital literacy, civic engagement, and utopian aspirations in the same context.

Therefore, there is still a need to further understand how the perspectives and experiences of digital natives contribute to building utopian civic engagement. This research is unique in using the Grounded Theory approach, which allows for a deeper understanding of the role of digital literacy, civic engagement, and utopian aspirations in the context of digital natives. Thus, this research is expected to contribute new insights to the existing literature by exploring deeper dimensions of this relationship. In Indonesia, several studies have been conducted to examine digital literacy and civic engagement among digital natives. The role of digital literacy in shaping digital political participation among Indonesian youth (Handoko et al., 2023). They found that digital natives with high digital literacy skills tend to be more active in participating in online political discussions and have higher political awareness.

Furthermore, digital literacy is crucial in shaping civic engagement among Indonesian digital natives (Purwantiningsih et al., 2022). They found that digital natives with good knowledge and digital literacy skills have better abilities to access political information, participate in political activities, and contribute to social change. A study Apriyanto et al. also emphasizes the importance of digital literacy education in the Indonesian context (Apriyanto et al., 2021). They highlight the need for curriculum development, including digital literacy, to prepare digital natives to face challenges and opportunities in the digital era. They found that students with good digital literacy tend to participate more actively in digital citizenship activities, including political discussions, social campaigns, and collective actions. These studies demonstrate that digital literacy significantly shapes digital civic engagement among Indonesian digital natives. In Indonesia's social, cultural, and geographic diversity, these studies provide important insights into developing relevant educational strategies and policies to enhance digital literacy and meaningful civic participation in the digital era.

Therefore, this research is highly relevant in the social and educational context. By better understanding how digital literacy can help develop utopian civic engagement among digital natives, this research can provide valuable insights for stakeholders in designing effective educational strategies and policies that support the development of digital literacy skills. Thus, this research can potentially influence educational practices and community development in Indonesia in the digital era. Based on the above background and justification, this research will explore the relationship between digital literacy, civic engagement, and utopian aspirations among digital natives using the Grounded Theory approach. Through a comprehensive analysis of the perspectives and experiences of digital natives, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how Indonesian digital natives can be empowered through digital literacy to create a better future based on utopian civic engagement.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach using the Grounded Theory analysis method. According to Strauss and Corbin (2008), the Grounded Theory approach aims to understand and explain a complex social phenomenon through systematic data collection and analysis. They stress the importance of developing a theory that is "embedded" in data so that the theory emerges organically from the research process. Charmaz emphasizes the importance of in-depth data interpretation and the researchers' role in developing concepts that emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2014). This approach is used to gain a deeper understanding of the involvement of utopian citizenship among digital natives and the role of digital literacy in influencing this engagement. This research was conducted in the city of Bandung. This city was chosen based on the availability of good digital technology infrastructure and broad access to the Internet. Respondents to this study consisted of digital natives aged between 18 and 25 years, with a total of 15 respondents. Respondents were selected purposively by considering variations in terms of social background, education, and digital experience.

The data in this study were collected through in-depth interviews with respondents. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or through a video conference platform, according to the respondent's preferences. The interviews focused on the respondents' understanding of utopian civic engagement, digital literacy experiences, and hopes for a better future. The collected interview data will be analyzed using the Grounded Theory analytical approach. The analysis begins with open coding, in which the concepts, categories, and dimensions that emerge from the data are identified. Focused coding was then performed to narrow the focus of the analysis and develop relevant concepts. Selective coding will be carried out to select the main concepts that emerge from the data. NVivo version 12 Plus for MacBook software will help organize and manage data during the analysis process. The stages of analysis in the Grounded Theory approach can follow several steps developed by experts in the field. The following are some of the stages of analysis that are generally carried out:

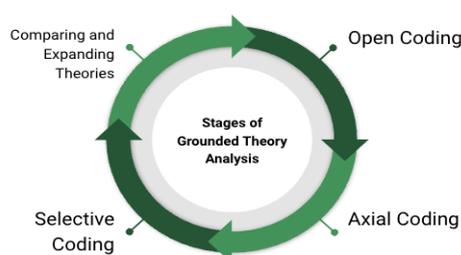


Figure 1. Stages of Grounded Theory Analysis

At the open coding stage, the researcher will break down the data obtained from the respondents into smaller units, identify emerging concepts, and assign a label or code to each of these concepts. For example, concepts such as "digital literacy," "civic engagement," and "utopian aspirations" can emerge from the data analyzed. Then, at the axial coding stage, the researcher will connect these concepts with broader concepts or existing theories. For example, researchers can look at the relationship between digital literacy levels and civic engagement levels among digital natives. Furthermore, the researcher will develop a more integrated theory based on the previously identified concepts at the selective coding stage. Researchers can develop interrelated concepts, find patterns or themes that cross data, and develop a more comprehensive theory of utopian civic engagement among digital natives through digital literacy.

A triangulation strategy will be used to increase the research's validity and reliability. Triangulation involves using various data sources, such as participatory observation, documentation, and literature studies. In addition, the results of this research will be verified and disseminated through presentation sessions to respondents and fellow researchers to obtain feedback and different perspectives. Using the Grounded Theory method, this research is expected to produce a deeper understanding of the role of digital literacy in influencing utopian citizenship among digital natives. The results of this research are expected to provide new insights and meaningful scientific contributions to understanding and empowering digital natives to build a better future.

This research involves ethics in maintaining integrity and compliance with applicable research principles. As researchers, we will ensure that this research is carried out with due observance of the required ethical approvals. We will seek approval from an authorized institution or ethics committee before commencing this research to ensure that the research meets established ethical standards and protects the interests and safety of participants. In

The coding that appears in NVivo version 12 Plus for MacBook consists of three main categories that are very relevant to this research. First, the coding category "Promoting Positive Social Media Use through Digital Literacy and Collaborative Problem-Solving" describes how digital literacy can encourage social media's positive use and enhance digital natives' ability to solve problems collaboratively. Through in-depth analysis, we can understand the practices and strategies used by digital natives to use social media positively and how digital literacy plays a key role in this process.

The next coding category is "Digital Literacy: Its Role in Strengthening Civic Engagement among Digital Natives". Through this coding, we identify and analyze how digital literacy can strengthen civic engagement among digital natives. This includes their understanding of social and political issues, their participation in online discussion and action, and the impact of digital literacy on shaping their social and political awareness. This coding provides important insights into the relationship between digital literacy and civic engagement in the digital age.

Finally, the "Personal Information Evaluation Criteria and Behavior" coding category discusses how digital natives evaluate personal information and regulate their behaviour in digital contexts. This coding reveals the criteria digital natives use to judge the authenticity and reliability of information and how they manage their personal information online. Through this analysis, we can understand digital natives' awareness of privacy and information security and their practices in managing personal information. This coding category provides in-depth insight into the influence of digital literacy on social media use, civic engagement, and management of personal information among digital natives. These findings contribute to understanding and developing strategies for empowering digital natives through digital literacy in today's digital era.

Discussion

In the context of "Promoting Positive Social Media Use through Digital Literacy and Collaborative Problem-Solving," we agree with the theory by Manca and Ranieri. They highlight the role of social media as a technology-enhanced learning environment in which digital literacy plays an important role (Manca & Ranieri, 2016). Our findings show that digital literacy enables digital natives to use social media positively and contribute to collaborative problem-solving. This aligns with Manca and Ranieri's theory which recognizes the potential of social media as an effective educational tool.

In the coding category "Digital Literacy: Its Role in Strengthening Civic Engagement among Digital Natives," our findings support the view expressed by Selwyn (2016). Her research highlights the importance of digital literacy in developing civic engagement in the digital age. We found that digital literacy is key to strengthening civic engagement among digital natives. This is in line with Selwyn's theory which emphasizes changes in the context of education and community participation due to the development of digital technology.

Finally, in the coding category "Personal Information Evaluation Criteria and Behavior," our findings support the theory put forward by Margaryan, Littlejohn, and Vojt. They highlight the importance of digital literacy in managing information critically, especially in identifying information authenticity and reliability (Margaryan et al., 2011). Our findings suggest that digital natives use similar evaluation criteria in managing their personal information. This is in line with the theory of Margaryan et al., which shows that digital natives can understand and use digital technology effectively.

Utopia theory, Levitas emphasize the importance of imagination and collaborative learning in creating an adaptive and innovative learning culture. In this study, coding about "promoting positive social media use through digital literacy and collaborative problem-solving" shows a close relationship between digital literacy, positive social media use, and

not just as passive consumers (Jenkins H, Shresthova S, Gamber-Thompson L, 2016). In this case, the word "information" in the word cloud reflects the important role of digital natives in actively participating in creating, sharing and updating information on social media and other digital platforms. This requires digital literacy, which includes the ability to contribute effectively to producing and distributing quality information. In citizen engagement, digital natives make intensive use of information to strengthen their participation in social and political issues. Good digital literacy enables them to access, evaluate and use information critically and responsibly. With these skills, they can engage in online discussions, campaigns and activities that promote positive social change.

When referring to utopian theory, applying good digital literacy and information access can create conditions supporting a utopian vision of a better society. In the theory of utopia, Nye suggests that technology and access to information can be tools to achieve social and political goals that are more just and inclusive (Nye, 2004). The word "information" in the word cloud may indicate that digital natives, with their digital literacy skills, have the potential to make effective use of information in building utopian visions that drive positive social change. Meanwhile, the utopian theory, as proposed by Cowles, describes an ideal picture of the society associated with open and transparent information (Cowles, 2009). In this case, the word "information" that appears in the word cloud can indicate the aspirations of digital natives in creating a transparent and open information environment where every individual has access to relevant knowledge and information. So from a utopian perspective, information is an important basis for realizing the ideal vision of a better society. Digital natives use the information to build a deep understanding of critical issues, initiate collaborative solutions, and effect change in areas such as the environment, human rights, and equity. In their utopian vision, information is a means to achieve a more just and sustainable social transformation.

In digital literacy, understanding and managing information is a key aspect of shaping digital native competence. According to the digital literacy theory developed by Gilster (1997), digital natives need to have skills in evaluating, interpreting, and using information found in digital environments. In addition, Buckingham states that digital literacy theory emphasizes the importance of understanding and skills in accessing, evaluating, and using information critically (Buckingham, 2002). The appearance of the word "information" in the word cloud can show digital natives' awareness of the need for digital literacy competencies to manage information wisely, sort valid information, and prevent the spread of false information. In this case, the word "information" in the word cloud highlights the importance of digital literacy in understanding and using information wisely so that digital natives can become skilled and critical consumers and producers of information. Digital literacy is key to understanding and using information wisely. Digital natives with good digital literacy can distinguish between reliable and unreliable information and evaluate the reliability and relevance of information sources.

In the theory of digital natives, the word "information" that appears in the word cloud describes the core nature of this digital generation. Prensky argues that digital natives have easy access to information through digital technology, shaping how they think, interact, and acquire knowledge (Prensky, 2001). Information is an important element in digital natives' identities and experiences, influencing their perception of the world and participation in society. This theoretical comparison indicates that digital literacy is important in managing information effectively. Digital natives must be able to sort, evaluate, and use the information they encounter online. With strong digital literacy, they can optimize the benefits of information and apply this knowledge in more effective civic participation. Thus, understanding and effectively managing information is key in optimizing the potential of digital literacy and engagement of digital natives. Developing skills in evaluating the reliability of the information,

understanding the social and political impact of information consumption, and contributing to the production and distribution of quality information will empower digital natives to achieve utopian goals and strengthen their civic engagement in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

Our analysis shows that digital literacy is crucial in driving positive social media use, strengthening citizen engagement among digital natives, and helping them manage personal information wisely. This finding is consistent with civic engagement theory, which emphasizes the importance of active participation in civic activities. In addition, our findings are also related to the concept of utopia, where digital literacy enables digital natives to develop innovative visions and solutions to achieve a better society. The importance of digital literacy in helping digital natives access, understand, and use information effectively is also evident in the analysis of the word "information" in the word cloud. Digital literacy provides the tools and skills necessary to manage information wisely, identify reliable sources of information, and maintain the privacy and security of personal information. This article provides a deeper understanding of the role of digital literacy in empowering digital natives and the importance of engaging citizens in the digital age. The implication of this finding is the need to develop effective and sustainable digital literacy programs in education and civic participation strategies supported by social media. Furthermore, this research can also be a basis for expanding our knowledge about citizen engagement, the concept of utopia, digital literacy, and digital natives through comparisons with related research that has been done previously. Thus, our efforts in empowering digital natives through digital literacy can encourage the creation of a better future for society as a whole.

The recommendation for further research is to deepen understanding of the role of digital literacy in strengthening civic engagement among digital natives. Studies can involve a deeper analysis of how digital literacy contributes to digital natives' understanding of social and political issues, their participation in online discussion and action, and the impact of digital literacy in shaping their social and political awareness. In this case, theories about the involvement of citizenship, utopia, and digital literacy can become relevant theoretical foundations to strengthen our understanding. Lastly, comparing and further analysing with related research in this domain is important. By comparing the findings with previous research, conformity or conflict with other people's research results can be identified. This will make an important contribution to our understanding of the role of digital literacy in empowering digital natives and their engagement in society. Thus, further research can broaden and deepen our knowledge to develop strategies and interventions that are more effective in strengthening digital citizenship engagement for the younger generation.

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