International Journal of Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Volume 2 Number 2 April 2025
e-ISSN: 3048-0841; p-ISSN: 3048-0833, Hal 233-244
DOI: https://doi.org/10.62951/ijeepa.v2i2.264
Available online at: https://international.aripi.or.id/index.php/IJEEPA

Innovative Education Strategies for Enhancing Digital Literacy and Student Intelligence

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Abstract. *This study examines the digital literacy of university students in the context of Indonesia's evolving digital landscape. In the era of Industry 4.0 and the emerging Society 5.0, higher education faces the challenge of preparing students not only academically but also as responsible digital citizens. The research explores the level of digital literacy among students, identifies factors contributing to their limited ability to critically evaluate digital information, and proposes strategies to enhance digital skills. Utilizing a quantitative approach with an online questionnaire distributed to students from various higher education institutions, the study assesses competencies in technical usage, information evaluation, and digital ethics. The findings reveal that while a majority of students exhibit basic digital awareness and a tendency to verify information through credible sources, significant gaps remain in their ability to discern misinformation and protect personal data. The study recommends integrating digital literacy into academic curricula, increasing access to reliable digital resources, and conducting regular training workshops. These measures aim to foster a more critical, informed, and digitally secure student body, better equipped to navigate the challenges of the modern information age.*

Keywords. *Digital Literacy, University Students, Higher Education, Evaluation, and Data Protection*.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the transition toward Society 5.0, the advancement of digital technology has transformed almost every aspect of human life, including education. As a generation immersed in the digital era, students have broad access to various information and technologies. However, this vast access does not always correlate with an understanding and ability to use technology effectively and responsibly. Therefore, it is crucial for students not only to possess academic intelligence but also strong digital literacy to navigate the increasingly complex challenges of globalization.

Digital literacy encompasses various essential skills, such as the ability to search for, comprehend, evaluate, and use information critically and ethically. Students with strong digital literacy can distinguish valid information, avoid spreading hoaxes, and utilize technology to support their academic and professional activities. Conversely, a lack of digital literacy can lead to several issues, including social media misuse, misinformation dissemination, reliance on unverified information, and difficulties in optimizing technology for education and research purposes.

Received: March 12, 2025; Revised: March 19, 2025; Accepted: March 26, 2025; Published: April 04, 2025

Research indicates that many students are still not critical in evaluating the information they encounter on the internet. While they actively use social media and various digital platforms, not all possess the ability to assess the credibility of information sources. This often results in students being easily influenced by misleading information, digital propaganda, and various forms of online manipulation. Moreover, many students have yet to fully understand digital ethics, including copyright, data privacy, and the responsible use of technology.

Beyond the challenge of filtering information, students must also develop skills in utilizing digital technology to enhance their academic productivity. The use of software for research, reference management, data analysis, and academic content creation is crucial for students in the digital age. Unfortunately, not all students receive adequate education on these aspects, causing many to rely on less effective conventional methods.

Universities, as higher education institutions, play a strategic role in shaping students who are not only intellectually excellent but also proficient in digital literacy. By integrating digital literacy into the curriculum, providing technology training, and educating students on digital ethics, universities can help students develop the necessary skills to compete in the digital era. Additionally, collaboration between academia, the government, and the technology industry is essential in creating a digital ecosystem that supports student development in facing global challenges.

Therefore, it is important to examine and develop effective strategies to cultivate students who are both intelligent and digitally literate. With strong digital literacy, students can not only enhance their learning quality but also contribute positively to the continuously evolving digital society. A solid understanding of digital literacy will help students become adaptive, innovative, and responsible individuals in an increasingly digitalized world.

2. METHODS

In this study, a quantitative approach was employed by distributing an online questionnaire to students as a data collection method. The research instrument, in the form of a questionnaire, was developed based on digital literacy indicators, such as technology usage skills, information evaluation, and digital ethics. A Likert scale (1–5) was used to measure respondents' level of agreement. The questionnaire was distributed via digital platforms such as Google Forms, email, WhatsApp, and social media to active students from various universities using a purposive sampling technique. Data were automatically collected over a specific period and then analyzed descriptively using statistical software, including frequency calculations, percentages, and the mean values of each indicator.

The results of the data analysis are presented in the form of tables, graphs, and charts that illustrate students' overall level of digital literacy, their habits in verifying information through credible sources, the digital information sources most frequently used for academic purposes, and their perceptions of the role of universities in supporting the improvement of digital literacy. The findings also reveal the main challenges students face regarding digital literacy and their level of interest in digital training programs that could be organized by universities.

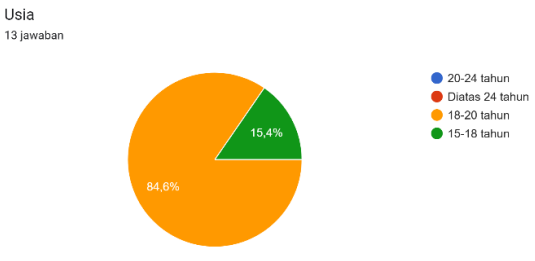
3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

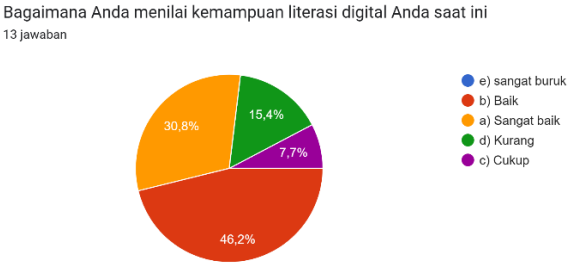
Data Description

This study was conducted online by distributing a digital questionnaire to students from various universities in Indonesia. This method enabled the research to reach a broader range of respondents without geographical limitations. The questionnaire was distributed through digital platforms such as Google Forms, WhatsApp, and Telegram over a specific period.

The research sample consisted of active students selected using a purposive sampling method based on the criteria of having access to digital devices and being accustomed to using technology in academic activities. Data collection was carried out using a closed-ended questionnaire based on a Likert scale (1–5), covering aspects of technical skills, information evaluation, ethical awareness, and the utilization of digital literacy in learning.

Once the data was collected, a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to identify response patterns, including frequency calculations, percentages, and mean values for each indicator. The data is presented in tables and graphs to illustrate students' levels of digital literacy. Validity and reliability tests were also performed to ensure the accuracy of the research instrument.





How Do You Assess Your Current Digital Literacy Skills?

1. Very Good (30.8%) – A portion of respondents rated their digital literacy skills as very good, indicating a high level of understanding and proficiency in using digital technology.
2. Good (46.2%) – The majority of respondents believe they have good digital literacy skills, though there may still be areas for improvement.
3. Fair (7.7%) – A small percentage of respondents consider their digital literacy skills to be fair, meaning they can use digital tools but with certain limitations.
4. Poor (15.4%) – Some respondents lack confidence in their digital literacy skills and may require more training or experience in this area.
5. Very Poor (0%) – No respondents rated their digital literacy skills as very poor, indicating that all participants have at least a basic understanding of digital technology.

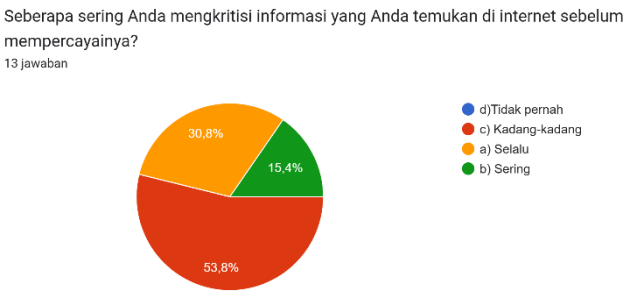
Overall, the majority of respondents (77%) rated their digital literacy skills as either good or very good. However, a small portion still lacks confidence, suggesting the need for further guidance in certain aspects of digital literacy.

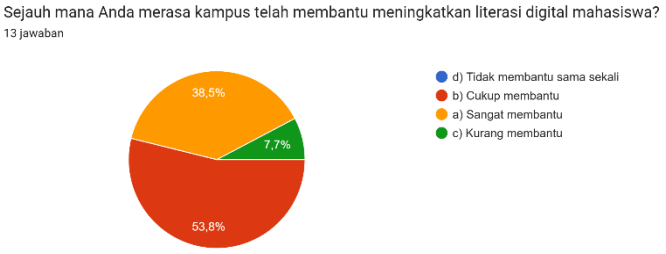
Age Demographics of Respondents

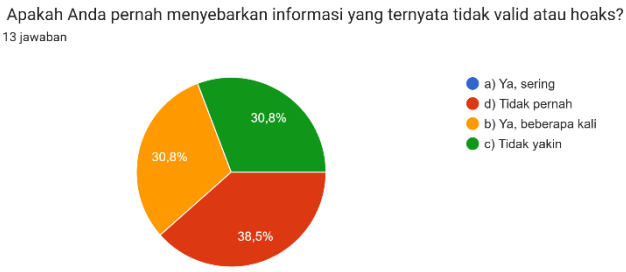
According to the age distribution chart, most respondents (84.6%) were between 20-24 years old, while 15.4% were above 24 years old. There were no respondents from the 15-18 or 18-20 age groups.

When linked to the digital literacy assessment results, most respondents who rated their digital literacy as "good" or "very good" likely belong to the 20-24 age group. This makes sense, as this group typically consists of university students or young professionals who are accustomed to using digital technology in their daily lives, both for academic and professional purposes.

On the other hand, respondents aged above 24 years may have varying levels of digital literacy depending on their educational background and profession. However, since their numbers are smaller, their influence on the overall results is not significant.







How Often Do You Critically Evaluate Information on the Internet Before Believing It?

1. 53.8% chose "Sometimes", indicating that more than half of the respondents do not consistently verify information before trusting it.
2. 30.8% chose "Often", meaning they are fairly active in filtering information before accepting it as truth.
3. 15.4% chose "Always", showing that a small percentage of respondents consistently evaluate information critically.
4. No respondents chose "Never", meaning all participants have at least occasionally verified information.

Most Frequently Used Digital Information Sources for Academic Purpose.

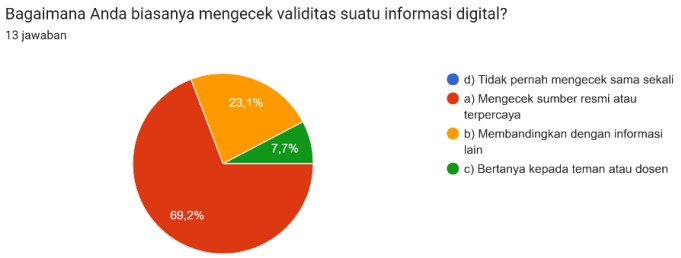
1. 46.2% of respondents rely on official educational institution websites, indicating that the majority of students prefer credible sources.
2. 30.8% use Wikipedia and similar sources, even though these are not always considered valid academic references.
3. 15.4% utilize online conferences or seminars, which can be trusted sources that contribute to academic growth.
4. 7.7% rely on blogs or online discussion forums, which tend to be more subjective and less verified.
5. No respondents selected social media as their primary source, reflecting their awareness of its limitations in providing reliable academic information.

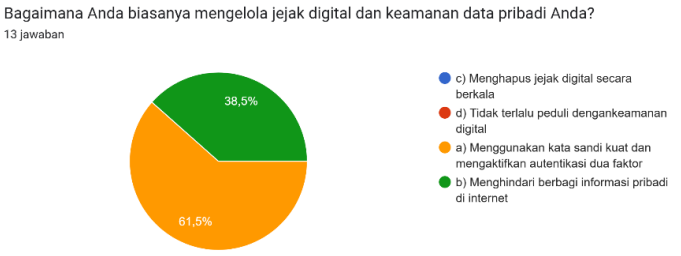
To What Extent Does the University Help Improve Students' Digital Literacy?

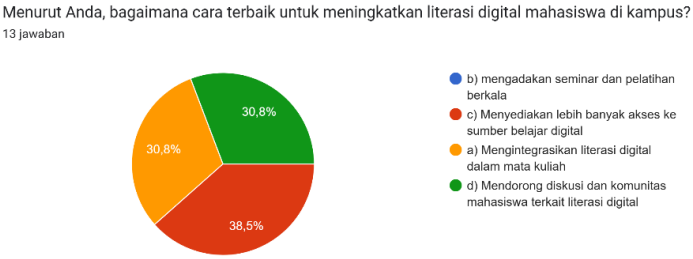
1. 53.8% of respondents believe the university is "Somewhat Helpful", suggesting that while institutional support exists, there is still room for improvement.
2. 38.5% feel the university is "Very Helpful", indicating that a significant portion of students benefit from the facilities and programs offered.
3. 7.7% believe the university is "Not Very Helpful", while no respondents selected "Not Helpful at All," meaning universities still play a role in enhancing students' digital literacy.

Have You Ever Shared Invalid Information or Hoaxes?

1. 38.5% of respondents claim they have never shared hoaxes, reflecting a relatively high awareness of verifying information before sharing it.
2. 30.8% admit to having shared invalid information a few times, possibly due to a lack of verification before sharing.
3. 30.8% are "Not Sure" if they have ever spread hoaxes, highlighting some uncertainty or a lack of awareness in assessing the validity of information.
4. No respondents selected "Often", meaning most respondents are cautious when sharing information.







How Do You Usually Verify the Validity of Digital Information?

1. 69.2% of respondents check official or trusted sources, indicating that the majority already have a good habit of verifying information before believing it.
2. 23.1% compare it with other sources, showing that they attempt to cross-check information before accepting it as true.
3. 7.7% ask friends or lecturers, which can serve as an additional method to confirm the accuracy of information.
4. No respondents selected "Never check at all," meaning all participants are at least aware of the importance of information validation.

What Do You Think is the Biggest Challenge in Improving Students' Digital Literacy?

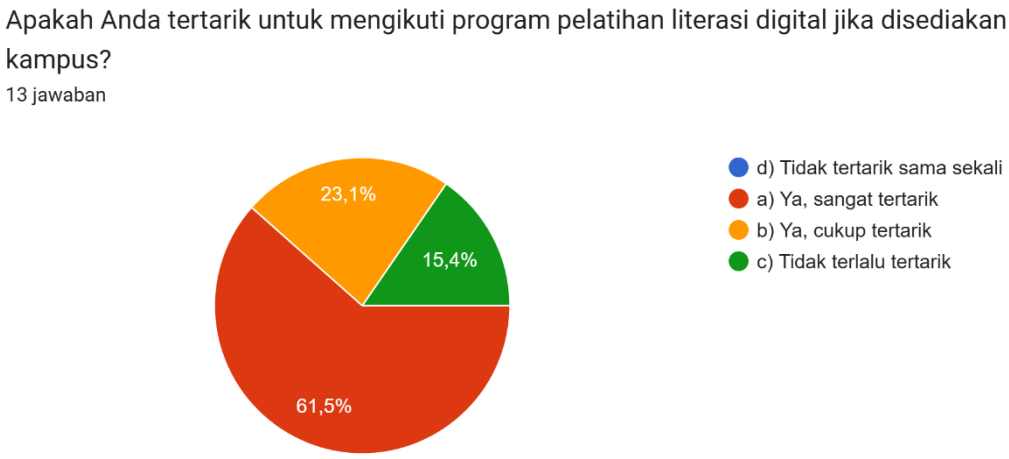
1. 46.2% identified a lack of awareness about the importance of digital literacy, suggesting that many students still do not fully understand the necessity of evaluating and analyzing digital information properly.
2. 23.1% believe that the overwhelming amount of information makes it difficult to distinguish accurate from false information, highlighting how the rapid and vast flow of information can be confusing.
3. 15.4% see limited access to credible sources as a challenge, possibly linked to the scarcity of quality academic references or digital literature.
4. 15.4% cited the lack of training or education in universities, indicating that there is still room for educational institutions to take a more active role in equipping students with digital literacy skills.

How Do You Manage Your Digital Footprint and Personal Data Security?

1. 61.5% use strong passwords and enable two-factor authentication, showing that most students understand the importance of digital security in protecting their personal data.
2. 38.5% avoid sharing personal information online, which is also a crucial step in maintaining privacy and digital security.
3. No respondents selected "Regularly deleting digital footprints" or "Not being concerned about digital security," meaning all participants are aware of the importance of maintaining their digital security.

What is the Best Way to Improve Students' Digital Literacy on Campus?

1. 38.5% of respondents believe that providing more access to digital learning resources would be the most effective approach, indicating that students feel the need for more credible references to support their digital literacy understanding.
2. 30.8% support integrating digital literacy into the curriculum, suggesting that students want digital literacy to be part of formal education for a more systematic and structured learning experience.
3. 30.8% prefer encouraging student discussions and communities related to digital literacy, showing that a community-based approach is also seen as an effective way to enhance digital literacy.
4. No respondents chose "Organizing periodic seminars and training," which may indicate that students prefer sustainable solutions over one-time events.



Are You Interested in Participating in a Digital Literacy Training Program Provided by the Campus?

1. 61.5% of respondents are highly interested in participating in a digital literacy training program. This indicates that the majority of students recognize the importance of digital literacy and wish to enhance their understanding through a program provided by the campus.
2. 23.1% are somewhat interested, meaning they have an interest in the program but may need more information or incentives to fully participate.
3. 15.4% are not very interested, which could be due to various factors such as a lack of understanding of the program's benefits or the assumption that they are already proficient in digital literacy.
4. No respondents selected "not interested at all," indicating that all students at least have some awareness of the importance of digital literacy, albeit at varying levels of interest.

Analysis of Research Findings

Based on the survey results, most students are already aware of the need to verify the validity of digital information before trusting it. The majority of respondents (69.2%) stated that they always check information through official and reliable sources, while 23.1% compare information with other sources before drawing conclusions. However, a small percentage of students (7.7%) rely more on friends or lecturers as sources of information validation. These findings suggest that while awareness of verifying information is quite high, further education is still needed to help students become more independent in assessing the credibility of information.

Regarding academic information sources, most students (46.2%) rely on official educational institution websites. However, a significant number also use social media (30.8%), Wikipedia or other open sources (15.4%), and blogs or online discussion forums (7.7%). The relatively high dependence on social media and non-academic sources indicates that students still need a deeper understanding of how to filter credible and valid information, especially in an academic context.

The biggest challenge students face in improving digital literacy is a lack of awareness of its importance, as stated by 46.2% of respondents. Additionally, 23.1% of students admitted to having difficulty distinguishing valid information due to the abundance of available information, while 15.4% cited limited access to credible sources as the main obstacle. Another 15.4% highlighted the lack of training or education on digital literacy at the campus as a significant challenge. This suggests the need for a more systematic strategy to enhance students' understanding of digital literacy.

Regarding digital footprint management and personal data security, 61.5% of students have demonstrated cautious behavior by avoiding sharing personal information online. Meanwhile, 38.5% actively delete their digital footprints regularly to maintain their privacy. However, the percentage of students who actively delete their digital footprints remains relatively low, indicating room for further education on the importance of data protection in the digital age.

Finally, when asked about their interest in a campus-provided digital literacy training program, the majority of students (61.5%) expressed strong interest, while 23.1% were somewhat interested. Only 15.4% of students were not very interested. This indicates that the implementation of a digital literacy training program on campus would receive positive reception from the majority of students, suggesting that efforts to improve digital literacy have a high potential for success if implemented with the right strategy.

Discussion of Research Findings

The research findings show that students have a reasonably good initial awareness of verifying digital information and safeguarding their personal data. However, the main challenge is a lack of deeper understanding of how to critically evaluate and filter information. One major issue found is the high reliance on social media as a source of academic information. While social media can be a quick way to access information, not all information circulating on these platforms is credible. Therefore, more intensive education is needed on how to differentiate between valid and invalid information, especially in academic and professional contexts.

Additionally, the lack of awareness about the importance of digital literacy is a significant barrier for students in enhancing this skill. Low awareness can result in students being less cautious when consuming digital information and not fully understanding the risks associated with misinformation and personal data security. Thus, improving digital literacy should begin by fostering stronger awareness among students about the importance of these skills in both their academic and professional lives.

The high positive response towards digital literacy training programs indicates that students have a desire to improve their understanding of digital literacy. The campus has a significant opportunity to develop training programs that can help students enhance their skills in filtering information, using credible academic sources, and maintaining their digital security. With structured and ongoing programs, students are expected to be better prepared to face the challenges of an increasingly complex digital era.

Overall, this study suggests that while students have a good initial understanding of digital literacy, further efforts are needed to enhance their ability to identify credible information, avoid misinformation, and protect their personal data in the digital world.

Implications of the Research on Student Digital Literacy Development

Based on the research findings, several implications can be applied to enhance students' digital literacy in the academic environment. One approach is to integrate digital literacy into the academic curriculum. Topics such as evaluating information, selecting credible academic sources, and safeguarding personal data can be included in various courses, especially those related to technology and communication. This would help students become more accustomed to applying digital literacy skills in their academic and professional lives.

Furthermore, increasing students' access to credible digital learning resources is crucial. Students should be encouraged to use scientific journals, digital libraries, and trusted online educational platforms more frequently. The campus can also collaborate with various educational service providers to offer broader access to valid and high-quality academic resources. Better access would enable students to find reliable references to support their studies more easily.

Digital security is also an essential aspect of student digital literacy development. Although most students are already cautious about protecting their personal data, many have not actively deleted their digital footprints or implemented additional security measures such as two-factor authentication. Therefore, the campus can organize special training sessions on digital privacy management and strategies to protect personal data from cyber threats.

Encouraging discussions and forming digital literacy communities within the campus environment can also be an effective solution for raising student awareness. An active community that discusses digital literacy issues would allow students to share information and experiences on how to best navigate digital challenges. Seminars, workshops, and group discussions can serve as platforms for students to better understand and develop their digital literacy skills.

Finally, the implementation of regular digital literacy training programs is essential given the high level of student interest in such programs. These training sessions can be conducted in various formats, both online and offline, to reach a broader audience. With a sustainable approach, students will have the opportunity to continually develop their digital literacy skills in line with technological and informational advancements.

Overall, this research highlights that improving student digital literacy can be achieved through a combination of strategies, including curriculum integration, increased access to credible learning resources, digital security education, the formation of digital literacy communities, and the implementation of regular training programs. With a systematic and continuous approach, students are expected to become more critical, wise, and responsible individuals in utilizing digital technology in their academic and professional lives

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that students have a good level of awareness in verifying digital information and protecting personal data. However, the main challenges they face are a lack of awareness about the importance of digital literacy and difficulty distinguishing valid information. Limited access to credible sources and the lack of training also pose obstacles. The majority of students are interested in participating in digital literacy training programs, indicating the need for further efforts from campuses to provide more systematic education. Overall, although initial awareness is present, more structured digital literacy improvement is still required.

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