

## Digital Literacy Education for Political Communication Ethics and Culture in Digital Space: Reflections After the 2024 Indonesian Simultaneous Elections

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### Abstract

The rapid development of information technology has given rise to social media as a new space for shaping public opinion, particularly in political participation and democratic practices. However, instead of strengthening democracy, digital media in Indonesia has often worsened public communication through the spread of disinformation, hate speech, and identity politicization. This became especially visible during the 2019 Indonesian Election and resurfaced in the 2024 Indonesian Simultaneous Elections, marked by sharp political polarization fueled by unchecked information flows on platforms like Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok. From a communication education perspective, digital literacy involves not only technical skills to access and manage information but also critical abilities to evaluate, create knowledge, and engage ethically in digital spaces. The four pillars of digital literacy introduced by Siberkreasi of the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo), which are digital skills; digital culture; digital ethics; and digital safety form a key foundation for fostering civilized political communication. In particular, digital culture and digital ethics play vital roles in shaping national character, reinforcing *Pancasila* values, and upholding ethical standards in free expression. This study reflects on the practice of digital literacy during the 2024 Indonesia Simultaneous Elections and identifies key lessons for strengthening communication education moving forward. By making digital literacy a strategic educational agenda, Indonesia's younger generation can be better equipped to enhance democratic practices through ethical, inclusive, and knowledge-based political communication in today's dynamic digital era.

*Keywords:* social media, public opinion, digital media, disinformation, 2024 Indonesian simultaneous elections, digital literacy, Siberkreasi, political communication

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## Introduction

The development of information technology has changed the landscape of contemporary democracy, especially through the presence of social media which has become a new space in the formation of public opinion and political participation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Smith, 2011). The media, which initially functioned as a pillar of democracy and a channel for public information, now faces serious challenges due to the rapid flow of free, fast digital information that is not always accompanied by validation and communication ethics (Bahruddin, 2019; Strömberg, 2015). In Indonesia, this phenomenon was clearly seen in the implementation of the 2019 General Election and became stronger in the 2024 Simultaneous Election, where platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok became the main means of campaigning, political communication, and the spread of disinformation, hate speech, and politicization of identity (Ramadlan, 2022; Syah et al., 2025).

Although social media has the potential to expand political participation, its ease of access and anonymity also open up space for political communication deviations, especially by users who do not understand journalistic principles and digital communication ethics (Bahruddin, 2019; Syafarani et al., 2023). In this context, Indonesia's digital democracy is still procedural, with the quality of participation not yet supported by adequate political knowledge (Hart et al., 2004; Maiello et al., 2003). This situation is exacerbated by the low level of digital literacy and the weak public awareness of the importance of ethical political communication.

To respond to these challenges, digital literacy needs to be interpreted not only as technical skills in accessing information, but also as critical and ethical abilities in sorting, assessing, and disseminating information responsibly (Setyaningsih et al., 2019; Suherdi, 2021). The Kominfo digital literacy program through the National Siberkreasi Movement emphasizes four main pillars: digital skills, digital culture, digital ethics, and digital safety (Fajri, 2022). Of the four pillars, digital culture and ethics are important foundations in shaping the nation's character and strengthening *Pancasila* values in the digital space. *Pancasila*, the philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state, consists of five core principles: belief in one supreme God, a just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by inner wisdom through deliberation, and social justice for all.

Thus, digital literacy rooted in ethical and cultural values is not only needed to stem the flow of hoaxes and hate speech, but is also strategic in supporting substantial democracy in Indonesia. This study aims to reflect on digital literacy practices in the context of the 2024 Simultaneous Elections and provide important implications for strengthening political communication education in the digital era. This study aims to answer the main question: how can digital literacy education strategies encourage the strengthening of ethics and culture of political communication in the 2024 Simultaneous Elections?

This study is based on a constructivist paradigm that views social reality as the result of joint construction through interaction, symbols, and communication processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this context, social media as a digital communication space not only acts as a channel for information, but also as an arena for negotiating meaning, values, and political identities. Therefore, a qualitative approach based on library research is used to examine how digital literacy education plays a role in shaping healthy political communication ethics and culture amidst the dynamics of the 2024 Simultaneous Elections.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to filling the gap in academic discourse on the importance of digital ethics and culture in Indonesian electoral democracy. Amid the current of disinformation and hate speech that is spreading in the digital space, digital literacy education is not only a technical need, but also a normative need in realizing substantial democracy (Kominfo, 2023; Ward & Vedel, 2006). This study is expected to enrich the literature on the relationship between digital media, civic education, and strengthening democratic values in the era of technology-based political communication.

### **The Network Society Theory**

As a figure of the Network Society Theory, Castells (2011) argues that contemporary society is increasingly structured through networks that include communication technologies, social relations, economic systems, and cultural flows. In this society, identities can change and experience resistance because it is difficult to distinguish between reality and circulating symbols. Information and knowledge become central to economic production and social organization in the concept of “informationalism”, where individuals are connected locally and globally, influencing identity, social relations, and activism.

In his book “The Rise of the Network Society”, Castells outlines several key concepts:

1. Networks as the primary structure of modern society that connects various aspects of life.
2. Informationalism as a new form of social and economic organization based on information.
3. Flow Space that replaces the “place space” of industrial society, emphasizing the importance of global flows of information, capital, and culture.
4. Networked Individuals, namely the broad connectivity of individuals and its impact on identity and social relations.
5. Globalization as the interconnectedness of economy, culture, and society on a global scale.

In “Communication Power” (Castells, 2009), the role of communication and media in a network society is emphasized, especially the role of information technology in shaping social, economic, and political structures; the dynamics of power in communication networks and the control of information flows; media politics as a tool of power by various actors; resistance and activism that emerges through media; and the role of globalization in communication networks.

Overall, Castells’ Network Society Theory emphasizes social transformations due to technology and communication, and how power and resistance take place in a highly connected society. The book “The Rise of the Network Society” is a primary reference in understanding the relationship between technology, communication, and social change.

### **Methodology**

This study used a systematic literature review approach as a methodological basis for understanding the dynamics of digital literacy, political communication ethics, and digital space practices in the context of the 2024 Simultaneous Elections in Indonesia. The study was conducted by tracing, evaluating, and synthesizing various relevant literature sources, both from academic and institutional realms.

The data sources reviewed include scientific articles from reputable national and international journals (Scopus, SINTA, Google Scholar), policy reports from government institutions such as Kominfo, Bawaslu, and the Ministry of Education, as well as digital literacy program documents from the National Siberkreasi Movement. In addition, reports from civil society organizations such as SAFEnet, MAFINDO, and ICT Watch were also used as important references to capture critical perspectives on digital literacy practices in the field. The literature analyzed was selected based on certain inclusion criteria: published in the 2018–2024 period, relevant to the context of Indonesian digital democracy, and explicitly discussing issues of digital literacy, communication ethics, social media, or political participation.

The data collection process was carried out through a structured search using keywords such as “digital literacy”, “political communication ethics”, “Indonesian election social media”, and “digital culture”. The main databases used include Google Scholar, DOAJ, Scopus, and repositories owned by government institutions and non-governmental organizations.

Data analysis was carried out through a thematic content analysis approach, which includes three main stages. First, a data reduction process was carried out to filter the most relevant articles and documents. Second, the content of each source was categorized based on key themes such as digital ethics, digital culture, political disinformation, and the role of social media in the electoral process. Third, findings from various literatures were synthesized to identify patterns and relationships between concepts that answer the main question of how digital literacy education strategies can encourage the strengthening of ethics and culture of political communication in the 2024 Simultaneous Elections.

To maintain the sharpness of the analysis and increase the validity of the study results, a source triangulation strategy and cross-references between literature were applied. In addition, critical reflection on possible biases contained in previous studies was carried out to maintain the objectivity of interpretation.

## Findings

The results of this study can be described as follows:

### **Digital Literacy Gap Among Voters and Political Actors**

Based on various studies (Jatmiko, 2019; Kominfo, 2024; Rianto, 2019; Yilmaz et al., 2024), digital literacy in Indonesia shows significant inequality, both in terms of age, education, and geography. Young voters in urban areas tend to be more exposed to digital literacy programs, but this is not always accompanied by an ethical understanding of the use of political information. Meanwhile, many political actors both formal and informal still use social media manipulatively that strengthen identity polarization and spread content containing disinformation and hate speech (Azizah, 2023; Danaditya et al., 2022; SAFEnet, 2024).

This phenomenon reinforces the view that technical digital literacy (digital skills) does not automatically lead to digital ethics, let alone a digital culture that reflects the values of deliberative democracy (Singer & McConnell, 2021). A study in Indonesia by Purwantiningsih et al. (2022), along with a conceptual article by Smith (2020), underscores the urgency of promoting digital politeness and ethical responsibility in social media use as an integral part of digital citizenship. Meanwhile, Sari et al. (2024) highlights that moral and legal dimensions are critical elements in shaping a civil digital culture. Furthermore, community-based research by

Wulandari & Winarno (2021) demonstrates that digital ethics can be cultivated not only through normative instruction but also through real-life social practices and collective participation at the local level.

### **Weak Political Communication Ethics in Digital Space**

The studies by Arianto (2022), Trianto (2023), and Bawaslu (2024) show that violations of communication ethics increase during the digital campaign period, including the use of political buzzers, hoaxes containing ethnicity, religion, race and inter-group (SARA), and negative campaigns against political opponents. Low awareness of the principles of citizen journalism and the code of communication ethics has caused social media to become an arena for propaganda rather than dialogue (Felicia & Loisa, 2018).

This shows that Indonesia's digital democracy is still procedural, not substantial, because political communication is not yet rooted in public ethical values, such as honesty, respect, and responsibility (Latifah & Najicha, 2022; Lubis et al., 2022; Yulianto, 2023).

### **Relevance of Digital Culture in the Context of *Pancasila* Values**

The digital literacy program from Kominfo and Siberkreasi which emphasizes the four pillars of digital literacy is a positive first step. However, based on an evaluation by Amaly & Armiah (2021) and Krisnawati et al. (2023), the pillars of digital ethics and digital culture are still less dominant than technical skills. In fact, *Pancasila* values such as deliberation, tolerance, and social justice are very relevant to strengthening a healthy political communication culture in cyberspace.

Digital culture, which is interpreted as the internalization of local and national values into online practices, must be a primary concern in the development of digital literacy curricula and campaigns in the future (Khoirunisa et al., 2022; Wijaya, 2023).

### **Implications for Strengthening Political Communication Education**

Findings from the literature indicate the need for a multidisciplinary approach in digital political communication education combining technical, ethical, and cultural aspects. Educational institutions, governments, and civil society need to work together in designing political communication strategies that educate, not divide. This study recommends the integration of *Pancasila* values in digital literacy programs as an ethical and cultural foundation in building substantial digital democracy. These values are essential in shaping a digital communication culture rooted in tolerance, civic responsibility, and national integrity (Yorman & Sadam, 2025; Yusuf et al., 2024).

To strengthen the literature analysis, there is a thematic table that compiles findings from various references into main themes that are relevant to the focus of this study, namely digital literacy, communication ethics, digital culture, and digital democracy after the 2024 Simultaneous Elections:

**Table 1***Literature Analysis on Digital Literacy in Political Communication*

<b>Main Themes</b>	<b>Sub-Theme Focus</b>	<b>Literature Sources</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>
Digital Literacy	Definition and dimensions of digital literacy	Amaly and Armiah (2021); Kominfo (2023); Krisnawati et al. (2023)	Digital literacy includes 4 pillars: skills, culture, ethics, and digital security. Government programs are still dominant in technical aspects.
	Indonesian society's literacy level	Kominfo (2024); SAFEnet (2024)	Still low, especially in evaluative skills and digital ethics; has an impact on the high spread of hoaxes.
Political Communication Ethics	Political communication patterns on social media	Latifah and Najicha (2022); Lubis et al. (2022); Yulianto (2023); Bawaslu (2024); Yilmaz et al. (2024)	Political communication is often unethical, contains hate speech and disinformation, especially during political campaigns.
	The role of non-journalistic actors (influencers, buzzers)	Jatmiko (2019); Rianto (2019); Arianto (2022); Danaditya et al. (2022); Azizah (2023); Trianto (2023); SAFEnet (2024)	Political buzzers dominate digital narratives, blurring the lines between personal opinion and factual information.
Digital Culture	Cultural values in digital space	Smith (2020); Singer and McConnell (2021); Wulandari and Winarno (2021); Purwantiningsih et al. (2022); Sari et al. (2024); Kominfo (2024)	A healthy digital culture must uphold tolerance, rationality, and constructive participation.
	Challenges to <i>Pancasila</i> values in digital space	Felicia and Loisa (2018); Khoirunisa et al. (2022); Wijaya (2023); Kominfo (2024); SAFEnet (2024); Yusuf et al. (2024); Yorman and Sadam (2025)	Politicization of identity and intolerance often strengthen on social media; lack of awareness of national values.
Digital Democracy and Participation	Patterns of citizens' political participation on social media	Jatmiko (2019); Rianto (2019); Wulandari and Winarno (2021); Purwantiningsih et al. (2022); Sari et al. (2024); Yilmaz et al. (2024)	Social media opens up space for participation, but it is more procedural and not supported by substantial understanding.
	Challenges to the quality of democracy in the digital ecosystem	Arianto (2022); Trianto (2023)	Democratic dialogue is disrupted by polarization, digital noise, and weak public deliberation on online platforms.

## Conclusion

Digital literacy based on ethics and culture is an important foundation in building the quality of digital democracy in Indonesia, especially after the 2024 Simultaneous Elections. Findings from the literature show that although social media has opened up wider political participation space, the quality of this participation is still weak due to the dominance of digital narratives by non-journalistic actors, low critical literacy of the community, and minimal understanding of political communication ethics.

Digital literacy programs that have been initiated so far, such as the National Digital Literacy Movement by the Ministry of Communication and Information, have touched on aspects of technical skills, but have not fully reached the dimensions of digital culture and ethics in depth. As a result, the digital space is still vulnerable to the spread of disinformation, hate speech, and politicization of identity, which ultimately weakens the substance of democracy. Thus, there needs to be a strengthening of the understanding that digital literacy is not merely a technological skill, but a reflective ability to use digital space ethically, critically, and responsibly.

There are several recommendations that can be given in this study:

1. Reorientation of digital literacy programs: the government, especially the Ministry of Communication and Information and its strategic partners, needs to balance the focus of digital literacy from merely technical skills to strengthening digital culture and ethics that are contextual to the conditions of Indonesian democracy.
2. Integration of political communication ethics in education: formal and non-formal education curricula need to include education in digital political communication ethics so that the younger generation is not only technically competent, but also critical and has integrity in using the media.
3. Increasing the capacity of local actors and digital communities: local communities, positive influencers, and citizen journalists need to be empowered to become literacy agents who are able to fight the flow of disinformation through fact-based narratives and *Pancasila* values.
4. Strengthening regulation and moderation of digital platforms: the government needs to encourage social media platforms to be more responsible in moderating content, especially that which has the potential to divide society during political contestation.
5. Building an inclusive digital democracy ecosystem: digital participation must be directed towards inclusive and substantive deliberation, by creating healthy public dialogue spaces, free from symbolic violence and algorithmic manipulation.

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