

## **Students' Perceptions of the Importance of Civic Education in Dealing with Social Media Disinformation Level**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines students' perceptions of the role of Civic Education (Civics Education) in dealing with disinformation on social media. Through qualitative and quantitative approaches, the research analyzes the gap between Civics Education learning and the challenges of contemporary digital literacy. Data were collected through questionnaires, focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews. The results showed a correlation between the effectiveness of Civics learning and students' ability to identify disinformation, where students who engaged in critical analysis-based Civics learning showed a 27% higher score in identifying disinformation. The findings indicate the need to revitalize the Civics curriculum with an emphasis on digital literacy and digital citizenship as core components. The research recommends transforming the Civics learning model from a theoretical approach towards developing practical skills in evaluating digital information.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The digital era has significantly transformed the information landscape in contemporary society. The development of information and communication technology, particularly social media, has created a virtual public space that allows for the rapid and massive flow of information. However, behind this easy access to information lies a serious challenge in the form of increasing disinformation, which has the potential to threaten social, political, and national security stability. This challenge is further complicated when the primary targets of disinformation are young people, particularly school students who are still developing their identity and civic character.

Civics Education (PKn), as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary education, plays a strategic role in preparing students to become critical, reflective, and responsible citizens. As stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, PKn is intended to shape students into individuals with a sense of nationalism and love for their country. Amidst the increasingly massive flow of disinformation, PKn is expected to serve as a bulwark for students in filtering information and developing digital literacy.

A recent study shows that 64.8% of internet users in Indonesia are young people aged 9-19, and 97% of them actively use social media. This data confirms that young people, including school students, are the most vulnerable group to exposure to disinformation on social media. This vulnerability is caused by several factors, including

a lack of experience in evaluating the credibility of information sources, high levels of social media use, and a tendency to share information without adequate verification. The phenomenon of disinformation on social media has had various negative impacts on students, such as polarized political views, declining trust in democratic institutions, and increasing social intolerance. This highlights the urgency of integrating digital literacy and critical thinking into civics learning to equip students with the skills needed to navigate the post-truth era. However, studies on students' perceptions of the importance of civics in this context are still limited, even though understanding student perceptions is a crucial basis for developing effective curricula and learning methods.

This study aims to explore students' perceptions of the importance of Civics Education in addressing disinformation on social media. Specifically, this study will identify the extent to which students are aware of the role of Civics Education in developing critical thinking skills and digital literacy, analyze the factors influencing these perceptions, and formulate recommendations for developing Civics Education learning that is responsive to the challenges of disinformation. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to efforts to strengthen the role of Civics Education as a strategic instrument in preparing the younger generation to face the complexities of the digital era and the challenges of contemporary democracy.

## **2. METHOD**

Based on the problem studied, the research approach used was a quantitative approach with descriptive methods to obtain a comprehensive picture of students' perceptions of the importance of Civics Education in dealing with social media disinformation. The research subjects were high school students who actively use social media.

- a) Preparation Stage: At this stage, the research team conducted a preliminary survey to identify students' digital literacy conditions, analyze students' initial understanding of disinformation, prepare research instruments in the form of questionnaires and interview guidelines, and determine the criteria for respondents who will be involved in the research.
- b) Implementation Stage: The research team collected data by distributing questionnaires to predetermined samples, conducting in-depth interviews with several students selected using purposive sampling, and holding FGDs to explore students' perspectives in more depth on the role of Civic Education in dealing with social media disinformation.
- c) Analysis and Evaluation Stage: The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. The evaluation was conducted to measure students' level of understanding of the importance of Civics Education as an educational instrument that can equip them with critical thinking skills regarding information circulating on social media.

With this research approach, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture can be obtained regarding students' perceptions of the importance of Civic Education in dealing with the flow of disinformation on social media, so that it can become the basis for developing a more effective Civic Education learning model in improving digital literacy and disinformation detection skills in students.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research result**

This study involved 150 high school students, consisting of 78 boys (52%) and 72 girls (48%) aged 15-18. The majority of respondents accessed social media for more than 3 hours per day, indicating their high exposure to digital information.

Data analysis shows that 83% of respondents consider Civics Education (PKn) important in the school curriculum. However, only 57% believe it is relevant to everyday digital life. This finding indicates a gap between the general recognition of the importance of PKn and its application to the digital contexts students face.

In terms of understanding disinformation, 72% of students reported frequently encountering questionable information on social media, but only 45% felt capable of distinguishing between true and misinformation. The majority of students relied on intuition rather than systematic verification methods to assess the veracity of information. Only 38% of respondents routinely checked the source of information before believing or sharing it.

Data analysis showed a positive correlation ( $r = 0.67$ ) between students' perceptions of the effectiveness of Civics learning and their ability to identify disinformation. Students who rated Civics learning as effective tended to score higher on the disinformation identification test. This demonstrates the significant potential of Civics in building students' digital literacy skills. Focus group discussions (FGDs) revealed that Civics was considered effective in building digital citizenship awareness, but the learning still lacked integration of contemporary social media issues. Students expected more hands-on activities in Civics learning to identify disinformation, as well as more comprehensive material on social media ethics and digital responsibility.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

The gap between the perceived importance of Civics and its relevance to digital life can be explained by several factors. The majority of students reported that Civics learning is still dominated by lectures and theoretical assignments that lack contextualization with the digital challenges they face. Analysis of Civics learning materials shows that the portion of discussion on digital citizenship and media literacy is still limited, only around 10-15% of the total curriculum content. Furthermore, interviews indicated that not all Civics teachers have an adequate understanding of the dynamics of social media and contemporary forms of disinformation.

Students' low confidence in distinguishing between valid information and misinformation represents a significant digital literacy challenge. Students' tendency to rely on intuition rather than systematic verification demonstrates the need to strengthen analytical approaches in civics learning. The low level of information verification among students also indicates a culture of critical thinking about information that has not yet developed. Focus group discussion data shows that the majority of students do not fully understand how social media algorithms and digital platform business models can contribute to the spread of disinformation.

The positive correlation between perceived effectiveness of Civics learning and disinformation identification skills indicates the subject's significant potential in building student resilience to disinformation. Students who reported that their Civics teacher consistently encouraged critical analysis of information had 27% higher disinformation identification scores than other students. Civics learning that integrated analysis of actual disinformation cases into classroom discussions contributed to increased student awareness of disinformation patterns. Students involved in Civics projects on media analysis and anti-hoax campaigns demonstrated a better understanding of the mechanisms by which

disinformation spreads.

Based on student perceptions, effective civics learning model for the digital era has several important characteristics. Civics learning that explicitly integrates digital literacy components, such as source evaluation and fact-checking, was deemed more relevant by the majority of respondents. A case-based learning approach to disinformation and its impact on democracy was deemed more effective in building students' critical awareness. Collaborative learning activities, such as joint fact-checking projects, increased student engagement and increased their understanding of the complexities of digital information. Learning that encouraged students to reflect on their own media behavior was also deemed more transformative in developing self-awareness about vulnerability to disinformation.

The findings of this study have several important implications. First, there is a need for a revitalization of the Civics curriculum that places digital literacy and digital citizenship as core components, not merely supplements. Second, Civics teachers require ongoing professional development to enhance their understanding of the digital information ecosystem and effective learning methods. Third, Civics learning needs to transform from a knowledge-transmitting model to a model of developing critical skills and dispositions that enable students to become responsible digital citizens. Fourth, the effectiveness of Civics in addressing disinformation can be enhanced through collaboration with other subjects to develop a comprehensive approach to digital literacy.

The results of this study emphasize the importance of transforming civics education to address the challenges of the digital era, where the ability to critically evaluate information is a prerequisite for a functioning democracy. By revitalizing the civics learning approach to focus on developing critical thinking skills and digital literacy, this subject can play a more effective role in equipping students to face the challenges of disinformation on social media.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

Based on the research conducted, it can be concluded that the development of technology and social media has created new challenges in the form of disinformation, requiring strong digital literacy skills among students. The results showed that the majority of students (83%) recognized the importance of Civics Education (PKn) in the school curriculum, but only 57% considered this subject relevant to their daily digital lives. This gap indicates the need for a transformation in the approach to Civics learning.

The study also revealed that most students (72%) frequently encounter questionable information on social media, but only 45% feel capable of distinguishing between true information and misinformation. The majority of students still rely on intuition rather than systematic verification methods to assess the veracity of information. Another important finding is the positive correlation between perceived effectiveness of Civics learning and students' ability to identify disinformation, demonstrating the significant potential of this subject in building student resilience to disinformation.

Despite challenges in implementing effective civics learning for the digital age, this study identified several learning models deemed effective, such as digital literacy integration, case-based learning, collaborative activities, and reflective learning. Not all students have the same level of awareness and ability to deal with disinformation, and appropriate learning approaches can play a crucial role in reducing student vulnerability.

Based on these findings, schools need to revitalize the Civics curriculum by placing digital literacy and digital citizenship as core components, not merely supplements. Civics instruction must explicitly develop students' abilities to evaluate information sources and

apply critical thinking to social media content. Continuous professional development for Civics teachers is also needed to enhance their understanding of the digital information ecosystem and effective learning methods for developing students' digital literacy.

Schools are advised to actively organize outreach programs and workshops to raise student awareness about the impact of disinformation on democracy and social cohesion. Civics lessons need to be designed with a more interactive approach that is relevant to students' digital experiences, such as analyzing actual disinformation cases and collaborative fact-checking projects. Furthermore, cross-subject collaboration is needed to develop a comprehensive approach to digital literacy, involving subjects such as Indonesian, ICT, and Sociology in a joint effort to build students' abilities to deal with social media disinformation.

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