



The Role of Literacy in Increasing Legal Awareness in the Digital Era

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has brought major changes in the lifestyle of modern society. The ease of access to information on the internet opens up opportunities for the dissemination of knowledge, but it also raises various legal challenges such as hoaxes, hate speech, misuse of personal data, and the increase in cybercrime. To answer this challenge, literacy is a key factor in shaping people's legal awareness. This article discusses narratively the relationship between literacy, digital behavior, and legal awareness. Through the exploration of various social phenomena, reflections on people's behavior, and the study of the dynamics of the digital world, this paper shows that literacy is not only the ability to read information, but also the ability to understand, analyze, and act responsibly. With adequate literacy, people can avoid breaking the law and create a safe and ethical digital space.

Keywords: Literacy, Law, Digital Era, Hoaxes

Introduction

Digital transformation has changed the way humans work, communicate, and connect with each other. Interactions that used to be done face-to-face can now take place through the screen of the device. Social media has become a new public space where people express their opinions, share ideas, and express their identity (Sancaya, 2025). However, along with the development of digital currents, various legal issues have also arisen that were not previously found in the conventional era. The spread of hoaxes, defamation, digital bullying, work piracy, and cybercrime is evidence that the digital space has great potential for conflict (Hukumonline, 2021; Serah, Jha, Purwanto, Sirait, & Astono, 2025).

Unfortunately, many internet users in Indonesia do not have an adequate understanding of the limits of legal behavior in cyberspace. Many people think that the internet is a free space without rules. They upload, comment, and share things without thinking about the legal impact of the action (Siregar, 2024). This condition shows that the level of literacy, both digital literacy and legal literacy, still needs to be improved. For example, digital legal literacy education activities carried out by the National Legal Development Agency (BPHN) point out that innovation in the delivery of legal messages is needed because the development of information technology requires the public to understand the rules in the digital space (BPHN, 2025).

Literacy in the context of the digital age is not only the technical ability to use devices, but the ability to understand information correctly, think critically, and recognize the consequences of every action. As an example from a recent study: digital literacy has been shown to improve an individual's understanding of personal data protection and secure behavior in the network (Ginting, 2025). Legal

awareness is the expected result of good literacy, because a literate person tends to be more careful and understand the legal limitations that govern his or her digital activities.

This article discusses the relationship between literacy and legal awareness in depth, with an emphasis on the digital dynamics of Indonesian society and how literacy can be a bridge to building responsible digital behavior.

Research Methods

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to deeply understand the relationship between literacy and legal awareness in the context of the development of the digital space in Indonesia. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study does not focus on measuring numbers, but on a conceptual understanding of people's behavior and social phenomena related to the dynamics of digital law. This research was carried out through a structured literature review but still presented narratively in order to describe the relationship between theoretical data and empirical phenomena as a whole.

The main sources of research come from scientific articles, accredited journals, legal documents, government agency reports, as well as research articles that discuss legal literacy and awareness, including two articles obtained from the Garuda portal. The source was chosen because of its relevance to the theme of digital literacy, legal literacy, and its impact on people's behavior. Each literature is reviewed to find core ideas regarding the development of literacy, the character of technology users, potential violations of digital laws, and efforts to form legal awareness. In addition, this study also utilizes data from media reports and institutional reports related to digital legal cases that occur in the community to strengthen the analysis of the developing phenomenon.

Data analysis is carried out through the process of deep reading, grouping ideas, and interpreting the relationship between literacy theory and behavioral practices in the digital space. This process involves understanding the patterns of violations that often occur, such as the spread of fake news, hate speech, copyright infringement, and misuse of personal data. All data are then combined to form a comprehensive understanding of the influence of literacy on legal awareness. Using this approach, the research is able to produce a scientific picture that illustrates that literacy has an important role in shaping responsible digital behavior and in preventing violations of the law in the digital era.

Results And Discussion

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in the way people interact, access information, and interpret public spaces. The digital space is no longer just a complement to physical life, but has transformed into a new arena where identities, opinions, conflicts, and even violations of the law can occur. In this context, literacy plays a very important role, not only as a technical ability, but as a foundation for building legal awareness. Digital literacy and legal literacy go hand in hand as two aspects that affect the way a person understands the rules and acts responsibly on the internet. This discussion delves deeply into the relationship between the two, by

presenting an analysis of phenomena that develop in society, case examples, and relevant research findings.

Basically, literacy plays a role as a tool to filter, understand, and assess the information received. This ability is very important in dealing with the flow of information that is so heavy and often unverified. In the digital space, information can be disseminated with just one click, and that's where potential lawlessness arises. A user with high literacy will act more carefully. He will check the source, question the credibility of the information, and consider the legal consequences before taking further action. On the other hand, a person with low literacy will easily get carried away with the current, receive information as it is, and disseminate it without evaluation. As explained by Martin (2008), literacy not only provides the ability to read, but also the ability to think critically which is the basis for decision-making.

One of the real examples of the impact of low literacy is the rampant spread of hoaxes in Indonesia. This phenomenon repeatedly appears at the moment of elections, natural disasters, health issues, and socio-cultural problems. Hoaxes often spread because people believe in emotions more than facts. In this situation, literacy serves as a "mental filter" that limits impulsive actions. Hukumonline (2021) noted that some perpetrators of spreading hoaxes do not understand the criminal consequences that can be imposed on them. This ignorance shows how important legal literacy is in building public awareness. With legal literacy, one understands that the use of technology is inseparable from the rules, and that the spread of false information is not only a moral mistake but also a violation of the law that has serious consequences.

In addition to hoaxes, hate speech is another phenomenon that is strengthening in the digital era.

Social media is often an arena for infighting, emotional debate, and expressions of hatred against certain groups. Users who don't understand the legal limitations in expressing their opinions are often caught in violations. According to Hafizhah (2024), hate speech is not only a form of expression, but also an action that can trigger social conflicts and be categorized as a violation of the law based on applicable regulations. This means that literacy is needed not only to understand texts or information, but also to understand the social and legal contexts that govern a person's behavior. Thomas et al. (2021) show that literacy programs can reduce people's tendency to trust and spread hateful content, as literacy brings critical awareness and understanding of the social impact of such actions.

No less important is the issue of privacy and personal data management. In the digital age, personal data has become a high-value commodity. However, many people do not understand the consequences of sharing data carelessly. This can be seen in cases of account break-ins, identity theft, and digital fraud that are increasing. Digital literacy is very important in this aspect. Ginting (2025) explained that digital literacy has a significant effect on a person's level of awareness in protecting personal data. Someone with good digital literacy will understand that cybercriminals can use small things like full names, dates of birth, phone numbers, or identity photos to commit crimes. Furthermore, legal literacy makes a person understand that misuse of personal data is not only dangerous, but can also have legal implications, especially after the enactment of laws related to personal data protection.

The phenomenon of digital law violations triggered by low literacy is seen not only in adults, but also in students and college students. In various schools and campuses, violations such as plagiarism, use of other people's works without attribution, and misuse of photos and videos are common. In a study conducted by Singgih et al. (2025), reading literacy skills play an important role in forming critical thinking habits. When a person is used to reading analytically, he will also get used to thinking before acting, including in the digital space. This shows that literacy has a long-term relationship with a person's behavior. Literacy built from an early age is not only useful in academic activities, but also in the formation of digital legal awareness when they grow up.

In an educational perspective, the holistic literacy approach affirmed by Friyansyah et al. (2025) through the thought of Imam Al-Ghazali shows that literacy is not only an intellectual aspect, but also a moral and spiritual aspect. This means that digital legal literacy not only teaches rules, but also moral values that encourage a person to act wiser. People who understand ethical values tend to be more careful in disseminating information, more appreciative of the work of others, and more sensitive to the impact of their digital actions. In this context, literacy becomes a tool to shape character and not just technical knowledge.

These phenomena illustrate that literacy has a strategic role in reducing digital law violations. Literacy helps people understand legal limitations, digital risks, and personal responsibilities in the online space. When a person understands how technology works, how information is distributed, how data is managed, and how the law governs everything, then he will have a stronger legal awareness. Without literacy, a person may use technology based solely on pleasure or emotion, without understanding that the internet has binding rules. This awareness must be part of the culture of the digital society.

In the end, the results of this discussion show that literacy is not only a tool to overcome misinformation or avoid breaking the law, but also the foundation for building a healthy, safe, and responsible digital ecosystem. Literacy encourages people to be not only smart in using technology, but also wise and legally aware. With literacy, people can develop into critical, ethical technology users, and be able to play a role in creating a better digital culture.

Conclusion

Literacy has a very important role in shaping people's legal awareness in the digital era. The ability to understand and critically assess information makes individuals able to deal with the very rapid flow of information while also being able to recognize potential violations of the law that may arise in digital activities. The various phenomena that have been described show that violations such as the spread of fake news, hate speech, misuse of personal data, and copyright infringement generally occur due to a lack of understanding of how technology works and a lack of knowledge of the rules that govern the digital space. Literacy provides a foundation for people to be more careful, wiser, and more aware of the responsibilities inherent in every action in cyberspace.

With the increase in digital literacy and legal literacy, people will have better abilities to filter information, understand behavioral boundaries, and maintain the safety of themselves and others. Literacy not only helps a person avoid legal conflicts, but also strengthens ethical and moral attitudes in digital media. Therefore, increasing literacy needs to be an important agenda in education and public

policy so that people can build a healthier, safer, and more responsible digital culture. A literate society is a society that is able to use technology intelligently and is able to respect the value of legal values that apply in digital life.

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