

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN IMPROVING DIGITAL LITERACY AND ETHICAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG STUDENTS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

This study aims to discuss the central role of teachers in improving digital literacy and instilling ethical social media use among students through a literature review. Digital transformation has required teachers to not only master technological competencies but also integrate them creatively into the learning process. Teachers act as facilitators, mentors, and role models in shaping students' digital character, including guiding students to behave wisely and responsibly when using social media. Teachers' efforts include integrating digital literacy into the curriculum, providing training on social media ethics, fostering critical thinking towards information, and collaborating with parents and the school community. This study uses a literature review method by analysing literature related to the role of teachers, digital literacy strategies, and social media ethics education. The results of the review indicate that the success of digital literacy and social media ethics is greatly influenced by the capacity, innovation, and leadership of teachers. Thus, teachers are the key to creating a generation of students who are digitally literate and ethical in the virtual world.

Keywords: digital literacy, role of teachers, social media ethics, education, students

Introduction

The development of information and communication technology (ICT) has brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including education. This digital transformation has made access to and exchange of information faster and easier, encouraging people to adapt to increasingly complex digital lifestyles.

One of the main challenges facing the world of education today is preparing the younger generation to adapt to the developments of the digital age. Digital literacy has become one of the core competencies that students must possess, namely the ability to access, understand, evaluate, and utilise information wisely through digital technology (Khan, 2022). Teachers hold a strategic position in shaping the character and digital literacy skills of students. The role of teachers is no longer merely that of a conventional instructor but also that of a facilitator and guide in the productive and ethical use of ICT in daily learning (Iksal et al., 2024).

However, the rapid growth of social media use among students brings its own consequences. Social media has become an integral part of students' daily lives for communication, information seeking, and self-expression, but it also serves as a fertile

ground for challenges such as the spread of misinformation, cyberbullying, and privacy violations (Fawait et al., 2024) ; (Syakhrani & Aslan, 2024) . Low levels of digital literacy have been proven to correlate with the prevalence of negative phenomena on social media. A lack of understanding of digital media ethics, information verification, and data protection makes students vulnerable to harmful and even dangerous content (Jumani, 2022) .

Attention to improving students' digital literacy is not only to support academic achievement but also to shape a strong character in the midst of the digital information flow. With good digital literacy, students can develop critical, creative, and ethical thinking in utilising various information platforms, including social media.

Digital literacy, according to UNESCO, encompasses not only the technical aspects of using ICT but also cognitive, ethical, social-emotional, and digital responsibility dimensions. These aspects shape students' ability to critically think about circulating information and produce and disseminate positive content (Nasrullah et al., 2024) .

Teachers, as agents of change, need to have adequate digital competence to serve as role models for students. Efforts to integrate digital-based learning in the classroom, create creative learning content, and educate students on digital ethics are important tasks that must be carried out by teachers in this era. Teachers' readiness to utilise technology will greatly influence the effectiveness of learning in the digital classroom. Pedagogical, social, professional, and technological competencies are the main pillars for teachers to guide students not only to achieve academically but also to behave ethically in the digital world (Setiawan, 2018) .

The implementation of digital literacy in schools must be supported by collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community. The involvement of the entire educational ecosystem is crucial for digital literacy and social media ethics programmes to be internalised into students' daily lives (Abdullah & Sahid, 2023) .

Research related to digital literacy and ethical social media use is highly relevant for mapping teachers' competencies and the challenges they face in the field. This mapping data is useful for designing strategies, policies, and learning innovations that align with students' needs and characteristics in the digital age.

Thus, the role of teachers is increasingly central in efforts to improve digital literacy and foster ethical use of social media. This role is expected to serve as a strong foundation in building a young generation that is intelligent, productive, and of good character in the midst of a dynamic and challenging digital era.

Research Method

This study employs a library research method with a descriptive qualitative approach. Data was collected through searching, reviewing, and critically analysing various relevant literature sources such as books, journal articles, papers, and official

documents related to the role of teachers in improving digital literacy and instilling ethical use of social media among students (Elijah & Aslan, 2025) . The analysis was conducted systematically to select, review, and synthesise findings from these sources to gain a deep understanding of the concepts, strategies, and challenges faced by teachers in the context of this study. The results of the analysis of secondary data are presented narratively and comprehensively to answer the research questions that have been formulated (Page et al., 2021) .

Results and Discussion

The Role of Teachers in Enhancing Students' Digital Literacy

The digital era has brought both challenges and great opportunities to the world of education. Students must now be able to not only access information but also understand it critically, manage it, and use digital devices wisely and productively. In this context, teachers emerge as the primary agents in guiding and directing students toward comprehensive and responsible digital literacy (Desniyanti, 2025) .

The primary role of teachers begins with integrating technology into the learning process. Teachers need to adapt to various digital platforms—such as educational videos, learning applications, and educational social media—that can make learning more interesting and relevant to students' daily digital lives (Aprilia et al., 2025) .

Developing digital literacy is not enough with just introducing devices and applications. Teachers are required to equip students with the ability to search, evaluate, and filter information critically from the internet to avoid hoaxes and misleading information. Students need to be trained to understand which sources are credible and how to confirm the accuracy of information (Yunianti & Banda, 2023) .

The habit of digital ethics has become the central focus of the teacher's role. Teachers are tasked with instilling values such as respect for privacy, copyright awareness, and a positive culture in interacting in the virtual world. Teachers provide real examples in their daily digital behaviour and guide students in dealing with negative phenomena such as cyberbullying and hate speech (Mubtadi, 2024) .

Teacher training and capacity building are essential prerequisites. Teachers who have received digital literacy training are proven to be more confident and effective in integrating technology into learning, as well as being able to motivate students to be active and creative in the digital world. Empirically, improvements in teachers' digital literacy have an impact on students' digital literacy.

The practical strategies implemented by teachers are becoming increasingly varied. Teachers can hold virtual classes, give digital project-based assignments, use interactive applications such as Kahoot or Canva, and encourage online collaboration through forums or special digital groups for each class. Collaboration with parents and the community is becoming an increasingly emphasised approach. Teachers can organise joint training sessions with parents on the dangers of the internet, data

security, and tips for monitoring children's digital activities at home to create synergy between education at school and the family environment (Handiyani & Abidin, 2023).

Teachers also facilitate students in the safe and healthy use of digital devices. They emphasise the importance of balanced screen time, password security, and understanding the risks of personal data. Teachers provide guidance so that students become smart and responsible technology users (PLS FIP UNESA, 2025).

Guidance in the digital literacy process is conducted in stages. Teachers guide students from the introductory stage of device familiarisation, through application usage practice, to the ability to create simple digital products such as posters, infographics, or educational videos that support creativity and innovation (Simamora, 2024).

Teachers play a role in broadening students' perspectives on the global world. Digital literacy enables students to open themselves up and connect with information and international communities, strengthening their cross-cultural communication and global collaboration skills, which are essential in the 21st century. In addition to improving technical skills, digital literacy also influences students' character development. Teachers can foster critical thinking, curiosity, ethics, and self-confidence in students through technology-based learning experiences. Digital literacy helps students grow into adaptive and independent individuals (Safitri, 2024).

Teachers play a role in addressing the digital device access gap. They seek solutions when there are disparities in facilities or abilities among students, such as through limited face-to-face learning, device donations, or maximising available school resources (Irwan et al., 2024).

The principles of project-based learning are widely adopted for digital literacy. Teachers ask students to create digital works, online presentations, or conduct small research projects by exploring digital sources, so that digital literacy grows in a real and relevant context. Digital literacy assessment is also a focus for teachers. They evaluate not only technical knowledge but also how students apply ethics, digital safety, and communication skills in the online environment. Teachers use process-based assessment, self-reflection, and digital portfolios as indicators of progress (Sartika & Fransiska, 2024); (Judijanto et al., 2024).

Teachers as role models play a crucial role in the success of students' digital literacy. Through their attitudes, habits, and enthusiasm in using technology in their daily lives, teachers inspire students to continue learning and developing in the dynamic digital world (Oktahariana, 2025).

With their multifunctional roles—as facilitators, guides, supervisors, and role models—teachers hold the key to creating an adaptive, collaborative, and inclusive digital learning environment. The success of improving digital literacy ultimately depends on teachers' leadership in promoting meaningful and transformative learning in the ever-changing digital world.

Teachers' Efforts to Instil Ethical Use of Social Media Among Students

The development of digital technology has changed the patterns of social interaction among students, with social media becoming an integral part of their daily lives. Teachers face the challenge of guiding students to not only be technologically literate, but also have ethical awareness in using social media. Conscious and structured steps are needed to shape responsible digital character. Strengthening character values is the key focus integrated into the learning process. Teachers instil attitudes of responsibility, honesty, respect for privacy, and empathy by linking them to real-life situations—for example, through stories and real-life examples of the consequences of ethical violations on social media (Juliani & Aslan, 2024) ; (Mariska & Aslan, 2024) .

Interactive learning methods are highly effective for instilling digital ethics. Group discussions, simulations (role-playing), and social media case studies help students understand the direct impact of their behaviour in the virtual world and build critical awareness in facing digital challenges (Dewanto, 2024) .

Teachers utilise digital media and educational applications as learning tools. They encourage students to discuss contemporary issues, such as the spread of hoaxes, cyberbullying, and privacy violations that often occur on social media, and teach them how to deal with these situations ethically. Digital role models from teachers play a vital role in building ethical behaviour in students (Ergün & Kuzucu, 2024) . Teachers should maintain appropriate behaviour and language on social media, share only positive content, and implement data privacy protection measures to serve as role models worthy of emulation by students. Active parental involvement is crucial in instilling social media ethics. Teachers can organise seminars and workshops for parents to help them nurture their children at home, ensuring that digital ethics principles are consistently applied within the family environment (Hartono, 2024) .

Social media ethics education must be systematically integrated into the school curriculum. Topics such as digital etiquette, cybersecurity, and online responsibility can be taught through interdisciplinary subjects, particularly Religious Education, Civic Education, and Indonesian Language.

The implementation of extracurricular activities such as computer clubs and online workshops can serve as positive habits. These activities can enhance students' understanding of the dangers and benefits of social media and boost their confidence in interacting digitally in a safe and responsible manner. Teachers train students to always verify information before sharing it on social media. This critical thinking approach not only prevents the spread of misinformation but also fosters scientific and responsible behaviour when participating in digital spaces (Nur'arif, 2025) .

Students are guided to respect others' work and privacy on social media. Teachers encourage students to cite sources when sharing content, refrain from plagiarism, and exercise caution when sharing personal information to avoid digital crimes and data misuse risks (Fajri, 2025).

Cyber safety training is an important part of teachers' education for students. Teachers equip students with basic skills to protect their personal data, recognise various forms of online fraud, and report cases of cyberbullying. Strengthening digital literacy culture in the school environment is carried out through joint campaigns. Teachers, students, and parents establish mutual agreements on social media ethics, such as through the creation of posters, class slogans, or digital codes of conduct that are collectively adhered to (Kundaria, 2025).

Teachers encourage students to use social media as a platform for positive and collaborative expression. Project-based learning and educational content posting activities encourage students to actively create, share values, and build healthy learning networks in the digital world. Monitoring, evaluation, and self-reflection on their digital behaviour become routine practices that must be cultivated. Teachers conduct weekly or monthly reflections on anything students experience on social media so that teachers can provide guidance and solutions to concrete problems students face. (Widhanarto et al., 2024).

The reactive and proactive roles of teachers in dealing with digital ethics violations are essential. Teachers give warnings or guidance when violations occur and hold counselling sessions to help students understand and improve their behaviour (Amalia, 2024).

Therefore, these efforts require an improvement in teachers' digital literacy competencies. Regular training and professional development are absolutely necessary so that teachers can remain relevant, adaptive, and innovative in facing the rapid dynamics of the digital world, thereby effectively instilling ethical social media use in students.

Conclusion

The role of teachers is crucial in improving digital literacy among students. Teachers are not only responsible for applying and integrating technology into teaching and learning activities, but also act as facilitators, mentors, and supervisors who ensure that the use of digital devices is directed towards positive things. Through a planned approach and the use of interactive digital learning media, teachers can help students acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to navigate the digital world wisely.

Additionally, teachers have an important responsibility in instilling social media ethics in students. Teachers' efforts include educating students about responsible social media use, character building through digital values, and fostering information literacy and digital communication ethics. With adequate guidance and supervision, teachers

play a role in preventing social media abuse, such as the spread of hoaxes, cyberbullying, and privacy violations, so that students are able to use social media safely and productively.

Thus, digital literacy and social media ethics cannot be built solely through technology learning, but must be accompanied by consistent character building from teachers, collaboration with parents, and school support. A review of the literature confirms that the active, adaptive, and innovative role of teachers will create a learning ecosystem that shapes a young generation that is competent, critical, and ethical in the digital world.

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