



Reconstructing Digital Citizenship Education in Higher Education: A Humanistic Approach to Strengthening Critical Thinking, Ethical Awareness, and Civic Engagement among University Students

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Abstract

This study addresses the growing urgency to reconstruct digital citizenship education in higher education amid the complexity of digital transformation and the ethical challenges of contemporary societies. The study aims to develop a humanistic framework that strengthens critical thinking, ethical awareness, and civic engagement among university students. Employing a non-empirical qualitative approach, this research utilizes a comprehensive literature review and conceptual analysis to synthesize interdisciplinary theories, including global citizenship education, ethical education, and humanistic learning paradigms. The findings indicate that digital citizenship education requires a paradigm shift from technical skill orientation toward integrative learning that combines cognitive, moral, and social dimensions. Critical thinking emerges as a reflective and analytical competency shaped by interdisciplinary and technological contexts, while ethical awareness is grounded in value formation, cultural perspectives, and moral reasoning. Civic engagement is identified as the practical manifestation of these competencies through active participation in digital and social environments. The discussion highlights the importance of pedagogical innovation, curriculum integration, and institutional responsibility in fostering holistic digital citizenship. The study concludes that a humanistic approach provides a comprehensive framework for preparing students to navigate digital societies responsibly and contribute to sustainable social transformation.

Keywords: Civic engagement, critical thinking, digital citizenship, ethical awareness, humanistic education.



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INTRODUCTION

The accelerating entanglement between digital technologies and socio-political life has repositioned higher education as a critical arena for cultivating digitally competent and civically responsible citizens, particularly in a global context marked by rapid information flows, algorithmic mediation, and the proliferation of post-truth dynamics that reshape public discourse and democratic participation (Heggart, 2024; Chiriatti et al., 2026). Contemporary debates emphasize that digital citizenship is no longer confined to technical proficiency but increasingly encompasses ethical discernment, critical engagement, and participatory agency within digitally mediated environments, aligning with broader educational imperatives to address sustainability, democracy, and human development in the twenty-first century (Karatsiori, 2023; Ardiansyah et al., 2026). The expansion of digital ecosystems has simultaneously generated unprecedented opportunities for knowledge production and civic engagement while intensifying challenges related to misinformation, polarization, and the erosion of critical reasoning, thereby necessitating a reconfiguration of educational paradigms that move beyond instrumental digital skills toward integrative and human-centered approaches (Gutiérrez-Ujaque, 2024).

Empirical and theoretical scholarship has increasingly converged on the importance of integrating critical thinking, ethical awareness, and civic responsibility within digital citizenship education, suggesting that transformative pedagogical models can foster deeper student engagement and reflective participation in digital societies (Singh, 2025; Coelho et al., 2025). Studies indicate that democratic education frameworks contribute significantly to enhancing students' civic participation and critical reasoning capacities, particularly when learning environments are structured to encourage dialogue, reflexivity, and collaborative problem-solving (Videla et al., 2025). Parallel research

highlights that the development of digital citizenship is closely intertwined with students' personal values and critical dispositions, underscoring the role of higher education institutions in shaping moral and cognitive dimensions of digital engagement rather than merely transmitting technical competencies (Assante et al., 2022). Such findings collectively point toward the necessity of pedagogical approaches that integrate cognitive, ethical, and social dimensions in a coherent framework.

Despite these advancements, the literature reveals persistent conceptual and methodological limitations that constrain the effectiveness of digital citizenship education in higher education contexts, particularly in its tendency to fragment critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and civic engagement into discrete instructional components rather than treating them as interconnected dimensions of a holistic educational process (Gutiérrez-Ujaque, 2024; Singh, 2025). Many studies adopt technologically deterministic perspectives that prioritize digital literacy skills while underemphasizing the humanistic and relational aspects of learning, thereby limiting the transformative potential of educational interventions (Karatsiori, 2023). Moreover, inconsistencies emerge in how civic engagement is operationalized across different contexts, with some research focusing narrowly on participation metrics without adequately addressing the qualitative depth of students' ethical and critical engagement in digital spaces (Videla et al., 2025; Coelho et al., 2025). These gaps suggest a need for more integrative theoretical frameworks capable of reconciling cognitive, ethical, and civic dimensions within digital education.

The urgency of addressing these gaps becomes increasingly evident in light of global challenges such as democratic backsliding, digital misinformation, and socio-cultural fragmentation, which collectively demand educational responses that extend beyond technical competence toward fostering reflective, ethically grounded, and socially responsible individuals (Chiriatti et al., 2026; Kaya et al., 2025). Higher education institutions are uniquely positioned to mediate these challenges by cultivating forms of digital citizenship that are anchored in humanistic values, critical consciousness, and a commitment to the common good, particularly in diverse socio-cultural contexts where issues of identity, nationalism, and religious moderation intersect with digital engagement (Suryati et al., 2026). The growing emphasis on human literacy as a strategic component of civic education further reinforces the need to integrate emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, and social awareness into digital citizenship frameworks (Sari et al., 2020). Such considerations highlight the practical and theoretical necessity of rethinking existing models of digital citizenship education.

Within this evolving landscape, the present study positions itself at the intersection of digital citizenship education, humanistic pedagogy, and critical theory, advancing the argument that a reconstruction of digital citizenship education requires a paradigmatic shift toward a humanistic approach that foregrounds the interconnected development of critical thinking, ethical awareness, and civic engagement. This positioning responds directly to calls for more integrative and transformative educational models that move beyond fragmented or instrumental conceptions of digital literacy, instead embracing a holistic framework that situates learners as active, reflective, and ethically responsible participants in digital societies (Gutiérrez-Ujaque, 2024). By synthesizing insights from democratic education, global citizenship education, and human-centered learning paradigms, this research seeks to contribute to a more cohesive theoretical foundation for digital citizenship in higher education.

In methodological terms, this study adopts a qualitative, non-empirical approach grounded in a critical literature review, enabling a systematic examination of existing theoretical and empirical contributions while identifying patterns, tensions, and emergent themes within the field. Such an approach allows for a deeper conceptual interrogation of digital citizenship education, particularly in relation to how humanistic values can be operationalized within pedagogical practices and institutional frameworks. The emphasis on critical synthesis rather than descriptive aggregation aligns with the need to generate new theoretical insights that can inform both academic discourse and educational practice, especially in contexts where existing models have proven insufficient in addressing the complexities of digital-era citizenship (Assante et al., 2022).

This study aims to reconstruct the conceptual framework of digital citizenship education in higher education through a humanistic lens that integrates critical thinking, ethical awareness, and civic engagement as mutually reinforcing dimensions of student development. It seeks to contribute theoretically by proposing a more holistic and coherent model of digital citizenship that addresses existing conceptual gaps, and methodologically by demonstrating the value of critical, non-empirical

inquiry in advancing educational theory. The findings are expected to offer practical implications for educators and policymakers in designing more transformative and contextually responsive approaches to digital citizenship education in the contemporary era.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a non-empirical, qualitative conceptual research design, employing a systematic literature review combined with a humanistic philosophical analysis to reconstruct the framework of digital citizenship education in higher education. The data corpus consists of peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and policy documents published within the last decade, selected through purposive and criterion-based sampling. Inclusion criteria focus on works addressing digital citizenship, humanistic education, critical thinking, ethical awareness, and civic engagement in university contexts, while excluding non-scholarly and non-relevant sources. The analytical framework is grounded in humanistic educational theory, integrating perspectives from moral philosophy, critical pedagogy, and civic education to reinterpret digital citizenship as a value-oriented construct. This approach enables a multidimensional synthesis that aligns conceptual insights with the study's objective of strengthening students' intellectual and ethical capacities.

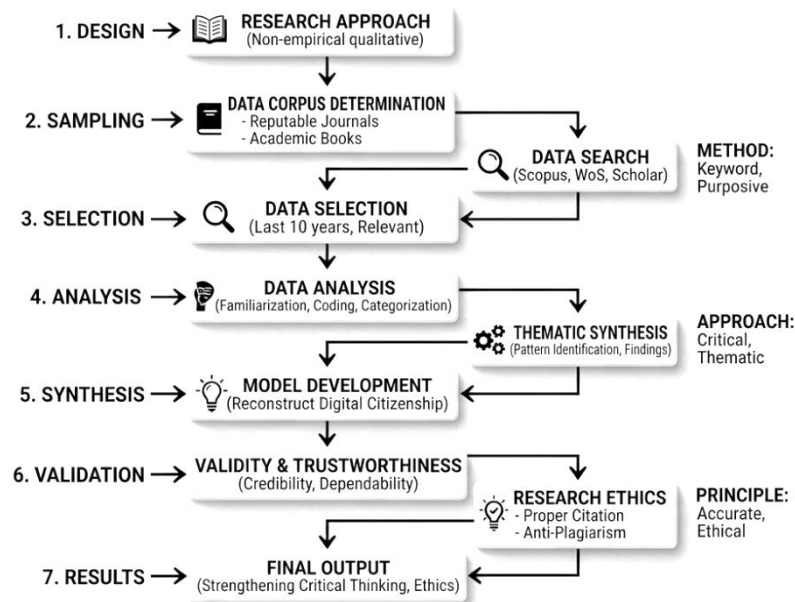


Figure 1. Flow Diagram of the Non-Empirical Qualitative Research Process

The analytical procedure follows a thematic synthesis and interpretative analysis, beginning with systematic coding of the selected literature to identify recurring themes related to critical thinking, ethical awareness, and civic engagement. These themes are then critically interpreted through a humanistic lens to construct an integrative conceptual model. To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, the study applies strategies such as source triangulation, theoretical saturation, and iterative comparison across studies. Analytical validity is further strengthened through reflexive evaluation and consistency checks in coding and interpretation. The reconstruction process emphasizes coherence, conceptual clarity, and theoretical depth, ensuring that the proposed framework is both academically robust and contextually relevant for higher education settings (Coelho et al., 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Humanistic Reconstruction of Digital Citizenship Education for Critical Thinking Development

The analytical reconstruction of digital citizenship education within a humanistic framework reveals a paradigmatic shift from instrumental digital skills toward reflective intellectual engagement. This shift emphasizes the cultivation of critical thinking as a foundational competence in navigating complex digital environments. Higher education institutions are increasingly required to reorient

pedagogical approaches to align with the epistemological demands of digital societies (Hanesová & Theodoulides, 2022). Conceptual analysis indicates that critical thinking in digital contexts extends beyond evaluation of information toward reflexive awareness of knowledge production processes. This orientation situates learners as active epistemic agents rather than passive consumers.

The integration of humanistic principles into digital citizenship education foregrounds the centrality of autonomy, dignity, and intellectual responsibility. Within this framework, critical thinking is not merely a cognitive skill but a moral-intellectual disposition shaped through dialogical engagement. The literature suggests that transformative learning environments enhance students' ability to interrogate digital content critically (Ramadhan et al., 2025). Such environments encourage questioning dominant narratives embedded in digital media ecosystems. The reconstruction therefore necessitates pedagogical designs that promote reflective inquiry and interpretive depth. A theoretical synthesis of global citizenship education underscores the importance of critical thinking as a tool for navigating transnational digital discourses. Digital citizenship education, when viewed through a humanistic lens, aligns with broader goals of fostering global awareness and ethical reasoning (Sant et al., 2026).

This alignment expands the scope of critical thinking to include intercultural understanding and geopolitical awareness. The analytical findings indicate that digital platforms function as contested spaces where knowledge and power intersect. Students must therefore develop critical literacies that enable them to decode ideological constructs embedded in digital communication. The relationship between higher education and critical thinking development is further reinforced by the concept of lifelong learning. Universities serve as critical spaces for cultivating intellectual habits that extend beyond formal education (Mayo, 2019).

Humanistic digital citizenship education contributes to this process by embedding critical inquiry within digital practices. This approach encourages students to engage with digital content as a site of continuous learning and reflection. The reconstruction highlights the necessity of integrating critical thinking across curricula rather than confining it to specific disciplines. An examination of socio-psychological determinants reveals that critical thinking is deeply influenced by value formation and ethical consciousness. Educational contexts play a significant role in shaping students' cognitive and moral orientations (Najafov, 2025).

Humanistic approaches to digital citizenship education emphasize the interplay between cognition and values in critical reasoning processes. This interplay fosters a more holistic understanding of digital engagement. Consequently, critical thinking emerges as both an intellectual and ethical competency. The incorporation of interdisciplinary perspectives enhances the depth of critical thinking within digital citizenship education. Integrative curricula that combine technology, ethics, and social sciences provide a comprehensive framework for analysis (Nurdi & Cahyadi, 2026).

These curricula enable students to examine digital phenomena from multiple epistemological standpoints. The analytical reconstruction demonstrates that such integration fosters higher-order thinking skills. Students become capable of synthesizing diverse forms of knowledge in evaluating digital information. Empirical trends synthesized from literature indicate a growing emphasis on critical thinking in digital education policies. This trend is reflected in various institutional frameworks that prioritize analytical competencies. The following table illustrates conceptual indicators of critical thinking development in digital citizenship education.

Table 1. Conceptual Dimensions of Critical Thinking in Humanistic Digital Citizenship Education

Indicator	Description	Relevance
Analytical Reasoning	Ability to evaluate digital information	High
Reflexive Thinking	Awareness of biases and assumptions	High
Argumentation Skills	Constructing evidence-based arguments	Medium
Digital Literacy	Understanding digital tools and media	High

The data presented in Table 1 suggest that analytical reasoning and reflexive thinking are central to effective digital citizenship. These indicators reinforce the argument that critical thinking must be embedded within digital learning environments. The conceptual model highlights the interdependence between cognitive skills and digital competencies. Such integration is essential for navigating complex information landscapes. The role of artificial intelligence in shaping digital learning environments introduces new dimensions to critical thinking. AI-driven platforms influence how information is curated and consumed. Ethical integration of AI in education requires critical awareness of algorithmic biases and data ethics (Torres-Rivera et al., 2025).

Students must develop the capacity to critically evaluate AI-generated content. This necessity underscores the evolving nature of critical thinking in technologically mediated contexts. Cross-border educational collaborations further complicate the landscape of digital citizenship education. These collaborations introduce diverse perspectives and epistemologies into digital learning environments. The dual context of artificial intelligence and geopolitics necessitates critical engagement with global digital dynamics (Zhu et al., 2025). Students must navigate cultural differences and power asymmetries in digital interactions. This complexity reinforces the importance of critical thinking as a global competence. The integration of cultural and religious perspectives enriches the humanistic reconstruction of digital citizenship education. Islamic educational frameworks, for instance, emphasize ethical reasoning and community-oriented thinking. These perspectives contribute to the development of critical consciousness in digital spaces (Al-Najmi et al., 2026).

The synthesis of cultural values with digital competencies enhances the depth of critical engagement. This integration supports a more inclusive and context-sensitive approach to digital education. Character education also plays a significant role in fostering critical thinking within digital citizenship frameworks. Moral character development is closely linked to the ability to engage in reflective and ethical reasoning (Sokol et al., 2021). Humanistic education emphasizes the cultivation of virtues such as integrity and responsibility. These virtues support the development of critical thinking as a socially accountable practice. The reconstruction highlights the interconnection between character and cognition. A second analytical dataset further illustrates the relationship between pedagogical approaches and critical thinking outcomes. The following table presents conceptual associations derived from literature synthesis.

Table 2. Analytical Framework of Critical Thinking Integration in Higher Education Contexts

Pedagogical Approach	Critical Thinking Outcome
Contextual Learning	Enhanced analytical skills
Reflective Dialogue	Increased reflexivity
Interdisciplinary Curriculum	Knowledge integration
AI-Integrated Learning	Algorithmic awareness

The data in Table 2 indicate that pedagogical strategies significantly influence the development of critical thinking. Reflective dialogue and interdisciplinary learning emerge as particularly effective approaches. These findings align with humanistic principles that prioritize active engagement and intellectual autonomy. The reconstruction therefore advocates for pedagogical innovation in digital citizenship education. The synthesis of literature also highlights the importance of national and cultural frameworks in shaping critical thinking. Educational philosophies grounded in local values, such as Pancasila, contribute to ethical and analytical development (Sartika et al., 2022).

These frameworks provide normative foundations for critical engagement in digital contexts. Integrating local and global perspectives enhances the relevance of digital citizenship education. This approach supports culturally responsive pedagogy. Further analysis indicates that transformative learning models play a crucial role in fostering critical thinking. These models emphasize experiential learning and social engagement. Cross-cultural literacy and empathy are integral components of such approaches (Abu et al., 2026). Students develop the ability to critically examine social issues within digital environments. This capability strengthens their role as informed digital citizens. The reconstruction also considers the role of curriculum innovation in promoting critical thinking. Love-

based and human-centered curricula emphasize relational and ethical dimensions of learning. These curricula foster reflective thinking and emotional intelligence (Aziz & Yusuf, 2026).

Integrating such approaches into digital citizenship education enhances cognitive and moral development. This integration supports a holistic educational paradigm. Philosophical perspectives on education further enrich the understanding of critical thinking development. Ibn Khaldun's educational philosophy emphasizes the integration of knowledge and critical inquiry. Contemporary curriculum theories build upon these foundations to address modern challenges (Fitria & Aziz, 2026). The synthesis of classical and modern perspectives provides a robust framework for digital citizenship education. This framework supports the development of critical thinking in diverse contexts. The final analytical insight emphasizes the role of institutional responsibility in fostering critical thinking. University social responsibility initiatives contribute to the development of socially engaged learners. These initiatives integrate community engagement with academic learning (Wang et al., 2026). Students are encouraged to apply critical thinking to real-world challenges. This approach reinforces the societal relevance of digital citizenship education.

The humanistic reconstruction of digital citizenship education reveals critical thinking as a multidimensional competency shaped by cognitive, ethical, and cultural factors. The synthesis of theoretical and conceptual analyses demonstrates the necessity of integrating critical thinking across digital learning environments. Pedagogical innovation, interdisciplinary integration, and ethical awareness emerge as key components. The findings underscore the importance of aligning educational practices with the complexities of digital societies. This reconstruction provides a comprehensive framework for advancing critical thinking in higher education.

Ethical Awareness as a Core Dimension of Humanistic Digital Citizenship Education

The reconstruction of digital citizenship education through a humanistic lens places ethical awareness at the center of digital engagement. Ethical awareness is conceptualized as the capacity to recognize, evaluate, and respond to moral dilemmas in digital environments. This capacity extends beyond rule-based compliance toward reflective moral reasoning. Higher education institutions are increasingly expected to cultivate ethical digital actors capable of navigating complex socio-technological landscapes (Torres-Rivera et al., 2025). The analytical framework suggests that ethical awareness is inseparable from the broader aims of humanistic education. The integration of ethical awareness into digital citizenship education requires a shift from procedural ethics to virtue-based approaches. Procedural ethics often focus on compliance with digital norms, whereas virtue-based approaches emphasize character formation. This distinction is significant in addressing the moral complexities of digital interactions. Ethical awareness involves internalized values that guide behavior in ambiguous situations (Najafov, 2025).

Such internalization is essential for sustaining ethical conduct in rapidly evolving digital contexts. Humanistic education frameworks highlight the importance of empathy, responsibility, and moral reflection in ethical development. These elements contribute to a deeper understanding of digital interactions as socially embedded practices. Ethical awareness is thus framed as a relational competence rather than an isolated cognitive skill. Educational practices that emphasize dialogue and reflection enhance students' moral sensitivity (Hanesová & Theodoulides, 2022). This sensitivity supports more nuanced engagement with digital content and communities. The role of cultural and religious values in shaping ethical awareness is particularly significant in diverse educational contexts. Islamic educational perspectives, for instance, integrate ethical reasoning with spiritual and communal values. These perspectives offer a holistic approach to moral education in digital spaces (Al-Najmi et al., 2026).

Ethical awareness in this context involves balancing individual autonomy with collective responsibility. Such integration enriches the conceptualization of digital citizenship education. Ethical awareness is further strengthened through the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge. Combining insights from philosophy, sociology, and technology studies provides a comprehensive understanding of digital ethics. This interdisciplinary approach enables students to analyze ethical issues from multiple perspectives. It also fosters critical engagement with technological systems and their societal implications (Nurdi & Cahyadi, 2026).

The reconstruction underscores the importance of curricular integration in promoting ethical awareness. The emergence of artificial intelligence in educational contexts introduces new ethical challenges that require careful consideration. AI systems influence decision-making processes and

shape access to information. Ethical awareness must therefore include an understanding of algorithmic governance and data ethics. Students need to critically assess the implications of AI in shaping knowledge and social relations (Zhu et al., 2025). This awareness is essential for responsible participation in digital societies. Empirical patterns synthesized from the literature indicate that ethical awareness is influenced by specific pedagogical strategies. These strategies emphasize reflection, dialogue, and experiential learning. The following table presents key dimensions of ethical awareness in digital citizenship education.

Table 3. Theoretical Constructs of Ethical Awareness in Digital Citizenship Education

Dimension	Description	Educational Implication
Moral Reasoning	Evaluating ethical dilemmas	Promotes critical judgment
Empathy	Understanding others' perspectives	Enhances social cohesion
Responsibility	Accountability for digital actions	Encourages ethical behavior
Digital Integrity	Honesty in digital interactions	Builds trust

The data in Table 3 illustrate that ethical awareness is a multidimensional construct requiring integrated pedagogical approaches. Moral reasoning and empathy emerge as foundational elements in ethical development. These dimensions align with humanistic educational principles that prioritize relational and reflective learning. The reconstruction indicates that ethical awareness cannot be developed through isolated instructional interventions. It requires sustained engagement across curricular and co-curricular activities. The integration of ethical awareness into global citizenship education further expands its scope. Global digital environments require students to engage with diverse cultural and ethical frameworks. Ethical awareness in this context involves negotiating differences and fostering mutual understanding (Sant et al., 2026).

This process enhances students' ability to participate in global digital communities responsibly. It also reinforces the importance of intercultural competence in digital citizenship. Community engagement initiatives within higher education provide practical contexts for developing ethical awareness. These initiatives connect academic learning with real-world social issues. Students are encouraged to apply ethical reasoning in addressing community challenges (Mittal & Bansal, 2024). This experiential approach strengthens the relevance of ethical awareness in digital and physical contexts. It also fosters a sense of social responsibility among learners.

University social responsibility programs further contribute to the development of ethical awareness by integrating sustainability and community engagement. These programs emphasize the role of universities in addressing societal challenges. Ethical awareness is cultivated through participation in socially oriented projects (Wang et al., 2026). Students develop a deeper understanding of the ethical implications of their actions. This engagement supports the formation of socially responsible digital citizens. A second analytical synthesis highlights the relationship between educational models and ethical outcomes. The following table presents conceptual associations derived from the literature.

Table 4. Comparative Analysis of Moral Education Approaches in Digital Contexts

Educational Model	Ethical Outcome
Love-Based Curriculum	Compassion and care
Pancasila Education	National ethical identity
Transformative Learning	Critical moral awareness
Character Education	Integrity and responsibility

The data in Table 4 demonstrate that diverse educational models contribute to the development of ethical awareness. Love-based and transformative learning approaches emphasize relational and reflective dimensions of ethics. These approaches align with humanistic principles that prioritize

holistic development. The reconstruction suggests that integrating multiple educational models enhances ethical outcomes. This integration supports a more comprehensive approach to digital citizenship education. The role of curriculum innovation is critical in embedding ethical awareness within digital education. Innovative curricula incorporate ethical reflection into digital practices. These curricula emphasize the interconnectedness of knowledge, values, and action (Fitria & Aziz, 2026).

Students are encouraged to engage with ethical issues as part of their academic learning. This approach fosters a deeper understanding of digital responsibility. Socio-psychological perspectives further illuminate the processes underlying ethical awareness development. These perspectives emphasize the interaction between individual cognition and social context. Ethical awareness is shaped through socialization processes and educational experiences (Najafov, 2025). This dynamic highlights the importance of supportive learning environments. Such environments enable students to explore ethical issues in a safe and reflective manner. Digital citizenship education also intersects with the recognition of ethical values within national education systems. Frameworks such as Pancasila provide normative guidance for ethical behavior. These frameworks contribute to the development of ethical awareness in digital contexts (Sutrisno et al., 2023).

Integrating national values with global perspectives enhances the relevance of digital citizenship education. This approach supports culturally grounded ethical development. The final analytical insight emphasizes the importance of sustainability in ethical awareness. Ethical digital practices contribute to broader goals of sustainable development. Students are encouraged to consider the long-term implications of their digital actions. This perspective aligns with the principles of responsible innovation and social accountability (Torres-Rivera et al., 2025). Ethical awareness thus becomes a key component of sustainable digital citizenship. In sum, ethical awareness emerges as a central dimension of humanistic digital citizenship education, shaped by interdisciplinary knowledge, cultural values, and pedagogical innovation. The synthesis of conceptual and theoretical analyses highlights the complexity of ethical development in digital contexts. Educational strategies that integrate reflection, dialogue, and experiential learning are particularly effective. The findings underscore the importance of aligning ethical awareness with broader educational goals. This reconstruction provides a robust framework for advancing ethical digital citizenship in higher education.

Civic Engagement in Digital Spaces as a Humanistic Outcome of Digital Citizenship Education

The reconstruction of digital citizenship education within a humanistic paradigm positions civic engagement as an essential outcome of higher learning. Civic engagement in digital spaces reflects the capacity of students to participate meaningfully in public discourse and collective problem-solving. This participation extends beyond passive interaction toward active contribution in shaping democratic digital environments. Higher education institutions are increasingly recognized as key actors in fostering civic responsibility among students (Mayo, 2019). The analytical perspective suggests that civic engagement must be cultivated as an integrated dimension of digital citizenship education. The humanistic approach emphasizes the development of socially responsible individuals who are capable of engaging with societal issues critically and constructively. Civic engagement in digital contexts requires not only technical competence but also ethical commitment and social awareness. Students must be equipped to navigate digital platforms as spaces of civic interaction and deliberation. Educational frameworks that integrate civic learning with digital practices enhance this capacity (Sant et al., 2026).

Such integration aligns with the broader mission of higher education in promoting democratic participation. The conceptual linkage between digital citizenship and civic engagement is reinforced by the principles of global citizenship education. These principles emphasize interconnectedness, responsibility, and participation in addressing global challenges. Digital platforms serve as critical arenas for the of these principles. Students are required to engage with diverse perspectives and negotiate complex social issues (Sutrisno et al., 2023). This engagement fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility within digital communities. Community engagement emerges as a central mechanism for translating digital competencies into civic action.

Higher education institutions increasingly adopt community-based learning models to bridge academic knowledge and societal needs. These models encourage students to apply digital tools in addressing real-world problems (Mittal & Bansal, 2024). Civic engagement is thus conceptualized as a practice-oriented outcome of digital citizenship education. The reconstruction highlights the importance

of experiential learning in fostering active citizenship. University social responsibility initiatives further strengthen the integration of civic engagement within higher education. These initiatives promote collaboration between universities and local communities. Students participate in projects that address social, environmental, and economic challenges. Such engagement fosters a sense of agency and accountability (Wang et al., 2026).

The analytical findings indicate that civic engagement is enhanced through institutional commitment to social responsibility. The role of digital platforms in facilitating civic participation introduces new opportunities and challenges. Social media, for instance, enables rapid dissemination of information and mobilization of collective action. However, it also presents risks related to misinformation and polarization. Students must develop critical digital literacies to navigate these challenges effectively (Al-Najmi et al., 2026). Civic engagement in this context requires both critical thinking and ethical awareness. The integration of cultural and religious values enriches the practice of civic engagement in digital spaces. Educational approaches that incorporate local wisdom and ethical traditions provide meaningful frameworks for engagement. Islamic educational perspectives, for example, emphasize collective responsibility and social justice. These values support the development of civic consciousness in digital environments (Nurdi & Cahyadi, 2026).

The reconstruction underscores the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy. Civic engagement is also closely linked to the development of moral character and social responsibility. Educational theories highlight the role of character education in fostering active citizenship. Students who develop strong moral foundations are more likely to engage in socially constructive activities (Sokol et al., 2021). This relationship emphasizes the interconnectedness of ethical awareness and civic participation. The humanistic framework integrates these dimensions into a cohesive educational model. The following table presents conceptual dimensions of civic engagement in digital citizenship education based on the synthesis of literature.

Table 5. Conceptual Indicators of Civic Engagement in Humanistic Digital Citizenship Education

Dimension	Description	Educational Outcome
Digital Participation	Active involvement in online communities	Enhanced civic agency
Social Responsibility	Commitment to societal well-being	Ethical engagement
Critical Advocacy	Promoting social justice through digital means	Transformative action
Collaborative Engagement	Working with others in digital initiatives	Collective problem-solving

The data in Table 5 indicate that civic engagement encompasses multiple dimensions that are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Digital participation and collaborative engagement are particularly significant in fostering collective action. These dimensions highlight the role of digital platforms as spaces for civic collaboration. The reconstruction suggests that effective digital citizenship education must address all dimensions of civic engagement. This approach ensures a comprehensive development of students as active citizens. The integration of contextual and transformative learning approaches further enhances civic engagement outcomes. Contextual learning connects academic content with real-life social issues. Transformative learning encourages critical reflection and social action. These approaches enable students to develop a deeper understanding of their role in society (Ramadhan et al., 2025).

Civic engagement thus becomes a process of continuous learning and social transformation. The influence of artificial intelligence and digital technologies on civic engagement cannot be overlooked. AI-driven platforms shape public discourse and influence civic participation. Students must develop the ability to critically engage with these technologies. Ethical integration of AI in education supports responsible digital participation (Torres-Rivera et al., 2025). This capability is essential for maintaining democratic values in digital environments. Cross-border educational collaboration introduces additional dimensions to civic engagement. Students engage with global issues and diverse cultural perspectives.

This engagement fosters intercultural competence and global awareness. The dual context of geopolitics and technology requires nuanced understanding of global dynamics (Zhu et al., 2025). Civic engagement in this context becomes both local and global in scope. Educational philosophies grounded in local values also contribute to the development of civic engagement. Pancasila education, for instance, emphasizes social harmony and collective responsibility. These values are integral to fostering civic participation in Indonesia. Integrating such frameworks into digital citizenship education enhances cultural relevance (Sartika et al., 2022).

This integration supports the development of contextually grounded civic engagement. Transformative educational models further highlight the importance of empathy and cross-cultural understanding in civic engagement. These models emphasize the role of education in promoting social change. Students are encouraged to engage with diverse communities and perspectives. Cross-cultural literacy enhances their ability to participate in inclusive digital spaces (Abu et al., 2026). Civic engagement thus becomes a vehicle for social transformation. The development of civic engagement is also influenced by curriculum design that prioritizes relational and ethical learning. Love-based curricula emphasize empathy, care, and social responsibility. These elements contribute to the formation of engaged and compassionate citizens (Aziz & Yusuf, 2026).

Integrating such approaches into digital citizenship education enhances civic outcomes. This integration reflects the principles of humanistic education. Philosophical perspectives on education provide additional insights into the development of civic engagement. Classical theories emphasize the role of education in shaping socially responsible individuals. Contemporary frameworks build upon these foundations to address digital challenges. The integration of traditional and modern perspectives strengthens educational practices (Fitria & Aziz, 2026). This synthesis supports a comprehensive approach to civic engagement. The final analytical perspective highlights the importance of institutional commitment in fostering civic engagement. Universities play a critical role in creating environments that support active citizenship. Institutional policies and programs must align with the goals of digital citizenship education. Civic engagement is strengthened through collaborative initiatives and community partnerships (Wang et al., 2026).

This alignment ensures the sustainability of civic education efforts. In conclusion, civic engagement emerges as a fundamental outcome of humanistic digital citizenship education, characterized by active participation, ethical responsibility, and social awareness. The synthesis of theoretical and conceptual analyses demonstrates the multifaceted nature of civic engagement in digital contexts. Educational strategies that integrate experiential learning, cultural values, and technological awareness are particularly effective. The findings highlight the importance of aligning digital education with democratic and societal goals. This reconstruction offers a comprehensive framework for fostering civic engagement among university students.

CONCLUSION

The reconstruction of digital citizenship education in higher education through a humanistic approach demonstrates that critical thinking, ethical awareness, and civic engagement are deeply interconnected dimensions rather than isolated competencies. The analysis highlights that critical thinking evolves as a reflective and epistemic practice shaped by interdisciplinary learning and technological awareness, while ethical awareness emerges as a value-oriented capacity grounded in moral reasoning, cultural context, and character education. Civic engagement, in turn, represents the practical manifestation of these competencies through active participation in digital and social environments. The synthesis of conceptual and theoretical perspectives confirms that a humanistic framework enables a more holistic and integrative model of digital citizenship education. This model aligns educational practices with the complex demands of contemporary digital societies and reinforces the transformative role of higher education institutions.

The findings emphasize that the successful implementation of humanistic digital citizenship education requires pedagogical innovation, curriculum integration, and institutional commitment. Interdisciplinary approaches, reflective learning strategies, and community-based engagement are identified as key drivers in strengthening students' intellectual, ethical, and civic capacities. The integration of global, cultural, and technological perspectives enhances the relevance and adaptability of educational frameworks in diverse contexts. These insights suggest that higher education must move beyond instrumental digital literacy toward cultivating socially responsible and critically engaged

digital citizens. The study provides a comprehensive conceptual foundation for future research and policy development aimed at advancing humanistic and sustainable digital citizenship education.

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