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Digital Literacy of EFL Students at Higher Education in Affirmation Areas

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Abstract

This study examines the digital skills, ethics, safety, and cultural aspects of 100 EFL students across several higher education institutions in designated regions of Indonesia. The study utilized a quantitative research design and a standardized questionnaire to evaluate students' skills in essential aspects of digital competence. The findings indicate that although students possess robust digital abilities, especially in searching and analyzing digital resources (84.2%) and safeguarding personal data (90.2%), there are significant deficiencies in their proficiency with Learning Management Systems (LMS), as just 76.6% display competency. However, students demonstrated significant awareness of digital ethics, with 91.2% adhering to privacy standards and 85.8% refraining from cyberbullying. The students exhibited commendable practices in digital safety, utilizing strong passwords (90.2%) and exercising prudence in information sharing (92.6%), although they fell short in validating information sources (85%) and updating software (83%). The study revealed

that students demonstrated a solid comprehension of digital culture, a deficiency existed in their engagement with global digital networks (79.6%). The Findings underscore the necessity for focused interventions in impoverished areas to close the digital divide, augment LMS engagement, and elevate ethical and safety standards. The research provides novel insights into digital literacy within affirmation areas, presenting implications for language learning frameworks in analogous contexts.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, EFL Students, Higher Education, Affirmation Areas, Quantitative Approach

INTRODUCTION

The digital age has transformed the methods of accessing, processing, and distributing knowledge, establishing digital literacy as an essential competency for individuals across all societal sectors (Fakhrudin & Haryanto, 2023; Subaveerapandiyan & Sinha, 2022). This revolution has profoundly influenced education, especially in the domain of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in higher education. The emergence of digital technologies has created novel educational opportunities, allowing students to access extensive material, participate in collaborative efforts, and improve their language skills through interactive and multimodal resources. (Al-Abdali & Alzayadi, 2020; Zigani & Evain, n.d.) In this context, digital literacy is beyond the mere ability to operate technical devices and software; it includes the proficiency to critically assess, communicate, and generate knowledge utilizing digital technologies (Buchholz et al., 2020; Young, 2017). As the digital environment advances, it is essential to comprehend how higher education students cultivate and utilize digital literacy abilities, especially in English as a Foreign Language. This frequently necessitates more excellent expertise and interaction with digital resources for language learning.

Digital literacy has garnered significant focus in educational research, particularly in higher education, owing to its crucial role in cultivating critical abilities for personal and professional success (C. Cao et al., 2023; J. Cao et al., 2023). "Digital literacy" conventionally denotes the capacity to proficiently and critically traverse and employ digital platforms, tools, and technology (Gilster, 1997; Koh et al., 2022; Odede & Jiyane, 2019). As digital environments grow increasingly complex, the definition of digital literacy has broadened to encompass many sub-skills, including digital communication, information evaluation, and online collaboration (Fakhrudin & Haryanto, 2023; Reichert et al., 2022). Digital literacy is critical in English language learning, as it enhances language proficiency and digital competence (Cao et al., 2023; Vonti & Grahadila, 2021). Students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in higher education, must proficiently acquire both the linguistic elements of the language and the digital tools that enhance their study and communication. Recent research has underscored the growing dependence on digital resources in classrooms of English as a Foreign Language (Cao et al., 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2023; Melkonyan & Matevosyan, 2020). The incorporation of technology in language acquisition, including multimedia resources, online dictionaries, e-learning platforms, and communication tools such as forums and video conferencing, has improved students' capacity to access varied learning materials and participate in real-time interactions with peers and instructors (Al-Abdali & Alzayadi, 2020; Kumar, 2023). This transition also poses obstacles, especially for pupils in impoverished or marginalized regions, where access to digital resources and abilities may be constrained. In underserved areas, or locations facing considerable social or educational obstacles, comprehending the level of digital literacy among EFL students is crucial for formulating successful

educational solutions that tackle these inequities (Doiraghusoha, 2022; Son et al., 2017).

The significance of digital literacy for EFL students is especially pertinent in affirmation areas, where access to internet resources may be inconsistent and where students frequently encounter extra socio-economic obstacles that impact their educational results (Delima et al., 2022; Li et al., 2020). Affirmation areas, often marked by economic underdevelopment, restricted access to quality educational resources, and diminished digital connectivity, present distinct challenges for the incorporation of digital literacy into language education (Delima et al., 2022; Parker & Conversano, 2021). Notwithstanding these obstacles, pupils in these regions are progressively encountering digital technology, frequently via mobile phones or community initiatives, which may establish a basis for advancing digital literacy. This study attempts to examine the digital literacy levels of EFL students in higher education institutions in specific regions, employing a quantitative methodology to assess the degree of their digital literacy competencies. This project aims to enhance the comprehension of how digital literacy is developed among higher education students, especially in areas with constrained resources and inadequate infrastructure. This study will utilize a survey-based methodology to examine multiple facets of digital literacy, including students' proficiency in utilizing digital resources for language acquisition, assessing online material, and communicating successfully via digital platforms.

This study's novelty comes in its emphasis on EFL students in affirmation areas, which have been inadequately addressed in current studies on digital literacy in higher education. The existing literature on digital literacy predominantly emphasizes developed countries with superior access to technology and resources, revealing a deficiency in studies about students' digital literacy

experiences in underrepresented areas. This research fills the vacuum by offering empirical data on the digital literacy of EFL students in disadvantaged areas, a crucial component for enhancing educational practices and policies. The study employs a quantitative methodology to systematically examine the correlation between digital literacy and diverse socio-demographic variables. This method offers a more objective and thorough comprehension of the digital literacy levels of EFL students, facilitating generalizability across analogous settings in various domains. This study's findings are anticipated to provide significant insights into the obstacles and opportunities encountered by EFL students in these places, guiding the formulation of tailored interventions to enhance their digital literacy and language learning experiences. This research enhances the existing information on digital literacy by offering a framework for assessing and developing digital literacy within EFL instruction. This study examines the impact of digital literacy on language learning outcomes and its interaction with socio-economic determinants, contributing a novel perspective to the discourse on effectively supporting EFL students in the digital era. The findings are especially beneficial for educators, policymakers, and institutions aiming to close the digital divide and provide fair access to quality education for all students, irrespective of their socio-economic status or geographic location.

METHOD

This study applies a quantitative research design to analyze EFL students' digital abilities, ethics, safety, and culture in higher education, particularly in affirmation areas. Quantitative research design is a strategy that allows researchers to measure variables using statistical, mathematical, or computational tools to test theories or generate predictions (Creswell, 2014). A cross-sectional

survey approach is adopted, allowing for data collection from many students at a particular time. This method effectively provides an overview of students' digital competencies in these regions and elucidates their engagement with digital tools, safety protocols, and ethical issues in the digital landscape. The research applied random sampling to cover 100 EFL students attending higher education institutions situated in affirmation areas of North Maluku Province, Indonesia. The aggregate number of samples is allocated among five universities that provide English education programs: (1) Khairun University, (2) Universitas Muhammadiyah Maluku Utara, Kie Raha School of Science and Education in Ternate City, Bumi Hijrah University in Tidore Islands City, and Pacific University Morotai in Morotai Island Regency. A purposive sampling method was employed to choose participants, guaranteeing representation of the student population utilizing digital tools and platforms for academic purposes. The pupils were chosen based on their enrollment in English language courses and exposure to digital technology in official educational environments. A sample size of 100 participants is considered adequate to yield accurate insights into the digital abilities of EFL students in various regions, hence ensuring the generalizability of the results across similar contexts.

Data collection was conducted with a standardized questionnaire of Likert scale items to evaluate students' digital competencies, ethical considerations, safety awareness, and cultural sensitivity in the digital realm. The Likert scale is a prevalent psychometric tool that assesses attitudes or opinions by prompting respondents to evaluate items on a continuum of agreement or disagreement, generally spanning from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (Likert, 1932). The questionnaire was designed

through an analysis of pertinent literature and established digital literacy frameworks, guaranteeing its relevance and thoroughness. The questionnaire comprises 25 indicators: 7 for digital skills, 6 for digital ethics, 6 for digital safety, and 6 for digital culture. The survey was disseminated online, and responses were gathered via Google Forms, facilitating convenient access and participation from the students. Before administering the survey, a pilot test was performed with a small cohort of students to verify the questionnaire's clarity, reliability, and validity. Descriptive statistics and frequency distributions were employed to discern trends and relationships within the data. Descriptive statistics, including mean, median, mode, and standard deviation, were employed to encapsulate the students' responses across diverse indications of digital abilities, ethics, safety, and culture. Frequency distributions were utilized to examine the responses to specific items on the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics are techniques employed to summarize, arrange, and present data effectively. These strategies enable researchers to delineate the principal characteristics of a dataset via metrics such as mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and range without extrapolating or generalizing beyond the available data (Triola, 2018). A frequency distribution is a table that presents the frequency of different outcomes within a sample (Freedman et al., 2007).

RESULTS

The research findings for each element of digital literacy skills, ethics, safety, and digital culture are presented as follows.

Statistical Analysis of EFL students' digital Skills

Table 1. Statistical Analysis of Digital Skills

Statistical Analysis	Results
Mean	28,46
Standard Error	0,45
Median	29,00
Mode	26,00
Standard Deviation	4,48
Total Sample	100

Table 1 presents a thorough overview of the digital competencies of 100 EFL students in higher education. The mean score of 28.46 signifies that the average digital proficiency among students was relatively good, indicating a strong understanding of fundamental digital skills. The median value of 29.00 corroborates this observation, indicating that half of the students had digital skills exceeding this level, validating that most pupils demonstrate moderate to high digital literacy. The mode of 26 suggests that many students were concentrated around this value, though not necessarily at the most significant levels of digital proficiency. The standard deviation of 4.48 shows variety in the data, indicating that although the majority of students possess a high level of digital skills, there remains substantial diversity, with some students exhibiting either poorer or higher abilities. The modest standard error of 0.45 indicates that the mean score accurately represents the population's typical digital proficiency.

The presentation of EFL students' digital skills

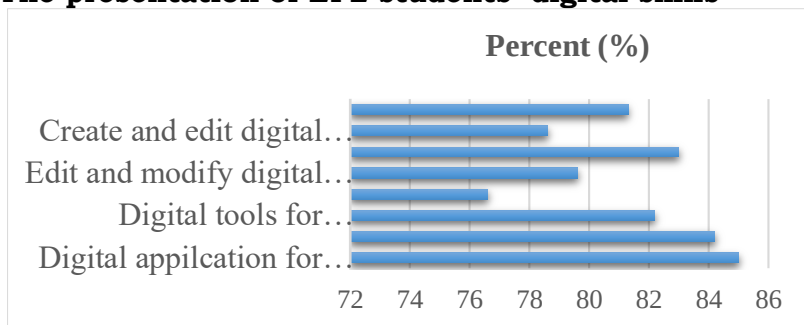


Figure 1. The Presentation of EFL Student's Digital Skills

Figure 1 illustrates the frequency distribution of students' replies concerning the seven principal digital skills markers. The findings indicate that most students (84.2%) demonstrated robust digital skills in exploring, analyzing, and exploiting digital resources, suggesting that most students are adept at independently locating and assessing information. Likewise, 83% of students exhibited proficient skills in communication technology, underscoring their capacity to utilize digital platforms for successful communication, which is crucial in both academic and professional environments. Other indications, like the utilization of digital applications for English learning (82%), digital tools for academic writing (82.2%), and the creation and editing of digital content (78.6%), all yielded high percentages, indicating that students are proficient in employing these tools for academic purposes. The utilization of Learning Management Systems (LMS), including Moodle and Google Classroom, had a marginally lower score of 76.6%, indicating potential for enhancement in students' proficiency and engagement with these platforms. The mean percentage across all variables is 81.31%, demonstrating robust overall competency while suggesting that specific areas require additional enhancement.

Statistical Analysis of EFL students' digital ethics

Table 2. Statistical Analysis of Digital Ethics

Statistical Analysis	Results
Mean	26,17
Standard Error	0,35
Median	26,50
Mode	30,00
Standard Deviation	3,54
Total Sample	100,00

Table 2 displays the statistical study of the digital ethics of 100 EFL students in higher education. The mean score of 26.17 indicates a moderate proficiency in digital ethics among the students, implying that they possess a satisfactory comprehension of ethical digital conduct. However, there remains potential for enhancement. The median score of 26.50 substantiates this conclusion, signifying that half of the students score above this threshold, suggesting that the distribution of digital ethics scores is focused around a somewhat average level. The mode of 30, denoting the most prevalent score, signifies that many students exhibit a heightened knowledge of digital ethics. The elevated mode value is accompanied by a standard deviation of 3.54, indicating the dispersion of results; this suggests that while most students perform within a narrow range, some either surpass or fall short of this ethical benchmark. The standard error of 0.35 is comparatively low, indicating that the mean score reliably reflects the whole sample.

The presentation of EFL students' digital ethics

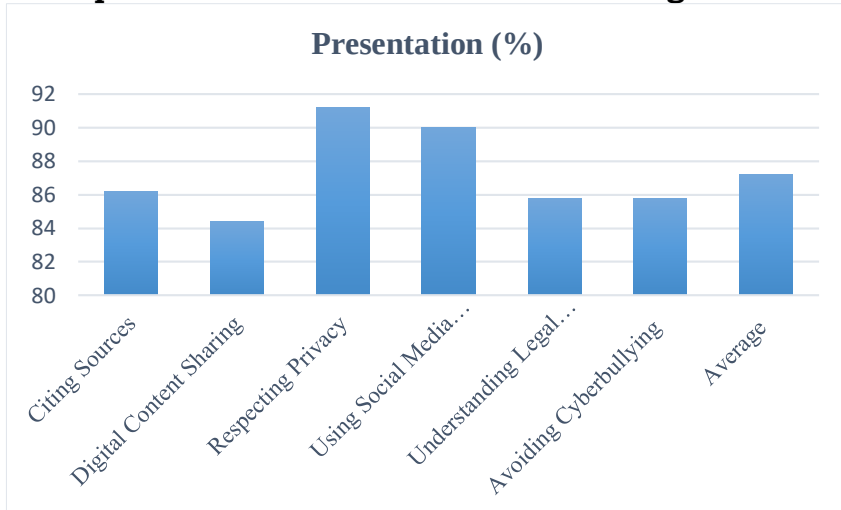


Figure 2. The Presentation of EFL Students' Digital Ethics

The analysis of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' digital ethics, as seen in Figure 2, uncovers substantial insights into their comprehension and actions. The typical presentation percentages reflect differing degrees of awareness regarding digital material sharing, privacy respect, and ethical social media usage. Students have a robust comprehension of privacy respect, as evidenced by the elevated percentage in this category, indicating an increasing knowledge of privacy issues in the digital realm. Nonetheless, domains like comprehension of legal ramifications and prevention of cyberbullying exhibit lower averages, indicating a deficiency in thorough digital ethics education. This indicates that although students are increasingly aware of specific ethical concerns, additional educational measures may be necessary to deepen their comprehension of their digital conduct's broader legal and societal ramifications. Consequently, the results underscore

the necessity for specialized digital ethics training to rectify these deficiencies.

Statistical Analysis of EFL Students' Digital Safety

Table 3. Statistical Analysis of Digital Safety

Statistical Analysis	Results
Mean	26,33
Standard Error	0,39
Median	27,00
Mode	30,00
Standard Deviation	3,91
Total Sample	100

Table 3 provides an average score of 26.33, indicating a considerable level of digital safety awareness among the students. This suggests that, on average, pupils exhibit a commendable comprehension of digital safety procedures, while there remains potential for enhancement. The median score of 27.00 substantiates this finding, signifying that half of the pupils achieve scores above this number while the other half score below, illustrating a fair distribution of digital safety knowledge. The mode of 30, the most often occurring score, signifies that many students demonstrate a heightened awareness of digital safety, implying that many students are diligent regarding their online security. The standard deviation of 3.91 indicates diversity in the data, with certain pupils exhibiting inferior or superior digital safety habits compared to the mean. A standard error of 0.39 indicates that the mean is a dependable indication of the population's overall digital safety level.

The presentation of EFL students' digital safety

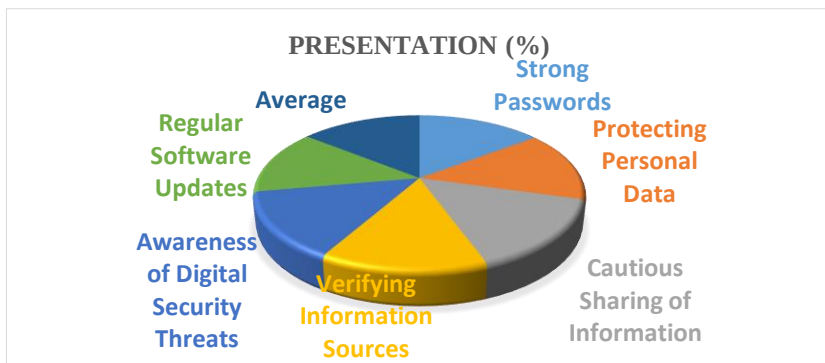


Figure 3. The Presentation of EFL Students' Digital Safety

Figure 3 presents a comprehensive frequency analysis of students' responses to six digital safety indicators. A significant 92.6% of students demonstrated superb skill in cautious information sharing, reflecting a heightened understanding of the risks linked to excessive disclosure of personal facts online. Moreover, 90.2% of students exhibited expertise in employing robust passwords, preserving personal data, and critical practices for protecting personal information from unauthorized access. Additional indications, including the verification of information sources (85%), understanding of digital security dangers (85.6%), and consistent software upgrades (83%) garnered substantial answers, indicating that students had a considerable awareness of potential digital threats and the requisite actions to mitigate them. The reduced rate of regular software upgrades (83%) may suggest a deficiency in students' involvement with critical security maintenance activities. The average of 87.77% indicates a robust digital safety awareness; nonetheless, focused education on software updates and vigilance against emerging security threats should further improve students' digital security habits.

Statistical Analysis of EFL Students' Digital Culture

Table 4. Statistical Analysis of Digital Culture

<i>Statistical Analysis</i>	Results
Mean	24,81
Standard Error	0,39
Median	25,00
Mode	30,00
Standard Deviation	3,88
Total Sample	100

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistical analysis of digital culture among 100 higher-education EFL students. The mean score of 24.81 signifies that the typical digital culture among students is moderate to high, indicating that most students have a reasonably advanced comprehension of the impact of digital surroundings on communication and interaction. The median value of 25.00 signifies that half of the students achieved scores exceeding this figure, indicating that most students cluster around this range, and the data reflects a very even distribution regarding digital cultural knowledge. The mode score of 30, indicating the most prevalent score, signifies that a considerable amount of students exhibit robust digital cultural knowledge, essential for effective interaction within global digital communities. The standard deviation of 3.88 signifies variability in the scores, reflecting diverse levels of digital cultural competency across pupils. The standard error of 0.39 indicates that the mean score reliably represents the students' general digital cultural awareness, with minimal uncertainty in estimating the population's average score.

The presentation of EFL students' Digital Culture

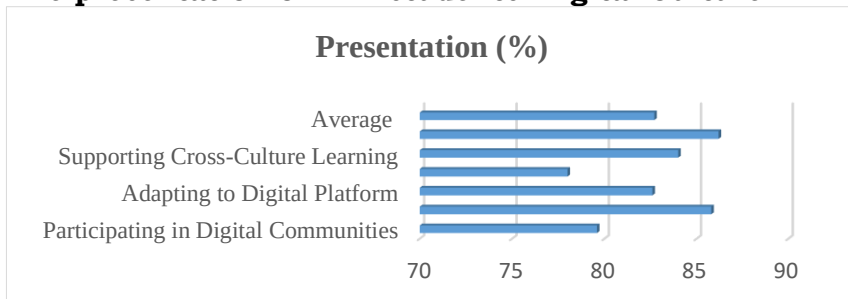


Figure 4. The Presentation of EFL Students Digital Culture

Figure 4 demonstrates the frequency of student replies to six key digital culture indicators. Most students (86.2%) demonstrated outstanding proficiency in adjusting to technological changes, indicating that most students are at ease with new and growing digital technologies. Likewise, 85.8% of students exhibited an awareness of cultural variations in digital contexts, indicating their cognizance of the varied norms and practices across international digital platforms, which is crucial in a multicultural digital landscape. Additional indicators, including adaptation to digital platforms (82.6%), facilitation of cross-cultural learning (84%), and involvement in digital communities (79.6%), also garnered high response rates, demonstrating that students are predominantly adept at utilizing digital tools to interact with diverse groups and platforms. The comparatively lower number for "Participating in Digital Communities" (79.6%) indicates a possible enhancement area where students could gain from increased engagement with global digital networks. The total average of 82.7% indicates robust digital cultural competency; nonetheless, further education in these domains could augment their efficacy in global digital contexts.

DISCUSSION

The examination of digital abilities among 100 EFL students reveals a reasonably high level of digital competence, with a mean score of 28.46. Students demonstrate proficiency in critical areas, including searching and evaluating internet resources (84.2%) and using digital tools for academic writing (82.2%). This indicates that pupils are proficient in employing digital tools for educational purposes, especially in language acquisition. Nonetheless, the research underscores areas requiring enhancement, specifically in using Learning Management Systems (LMS), where merely 76.6% of pupils exhibit proficiency.

These findings are encouraging and troubling in affirmation areas, where technological access and infrastructure are frequently restricted. The elevated proportion of students adept in fundamental digital competencies, including content creation and communication tools, can be ascribed to the growing accessibility of mobile devices and social media platforms. The comparatively poor LMS usage skill may suggest a formal digital literacy training deficiency essential for efficient learning in contemporary educational environments (Ally, 2019). This disparity may stem from insufficient access to digital platforms in these areas, where technology integration in education remains nascent. Recent studies indicate that students in underprivileged locations face difficulties with technology-mediated education due to restricted internet connection, potentially intensifying the obstacles of learning English via digital platforms (Salman et al., 2020). In contrast, Alamri's (2021) research on digital literacy in Saudi Arabian institutions revealed that students with consistent access to digital resources were more proficient in utilizing LMS and online platforms for academic purposes. This underscores the significance of infrastructure in developing students' digital

competencies and indicates that, despite students' promising abilities in certain areas, they may encounter substantial obstacles owing to inadequate infrastructure.

Ally (2019) emphasizes that students in technologically sophisticated regions are more likely to swiftly adapt to LMS platforms, unlike our study, where only 76.6% of students demonstrated proficiency in utilizing LMS. This gap is due to insufficient access to technology and resources in specific locations, which impedes students' ability to utilize these instructional tools effectively. Li and Wei (2019) investigated digital safety behaviours among Chinese university students, discovering that those having access to secure devices and networks had more excellent proficiency in measures such as employing strong passwords and validating information sources. The results align with our data, indicating that most students exhibited robust password practices (90.2%) and awareness of digital security issues (85.6%). The research conducted by Li and Wei (2019) revealed that a more significant % of students, 90%, participated in frequent software updates, in contrast to our sample, where only 83% indicated consistent software upgrades. As indicated in our research, this disparity may be ascribed to the comparatively limited access to current software and secure networks in impoverished areas.

The digital ethics data indicates a significant level of ethical awareness among students, with 91.2% of respondents exhibiting a robust comprehension of privacy respect and 90% acknowledging the ethical ramifications of social media usage. These results are encouraging, especially within digital learning contexts, where students must traverse online platforms, provide personal information, and interact with classmates and instructors. The elevated understanding of digital ethics indicates that students comprehend the significance of ethical behaviour in online interactions, which is essential for the secure and

responsible utilization of digital resources. Despite these favourable results, it is crucial to acknowledge that the ethics of digital content dissemination (84.4%) and the prevention of cyberbullying (85.8%) remain domains for future enhancement. The discrepancies in these responses illustrate the diverse levels of comprehension and application of ethical principles across various digital contexts. In areas with limited technological access, the lack of formal education in digital ethics may lead to misconceptions or insufficient attention. Recent studies highlight the necessity of digital ethics in language education, especially in EFL classes. Anwar (2020) emphasizes that including digital ethics in the curriculum enables students to make educated decisions during online interactions. The global trend of integrating digital ethics into higher education curricula is expanding, and this research highlights its importance in cultivating responsible digital citizens in specific domains. This study's conclusions concur with those of Aguaded et al. (2021), who assert that digital ethics must be incorporated at all educational tiers to foster responsible technology usage.

This study's findings regarding digital ethics correspond with Anwar's (2020) investigation into the incorporation of digital ethics teaching in EFL classrooms. Anwar (2020) discovered that students receiving organized digital ethics education exhibited enhanced knowledge and accountability in their online conduct, especially concerning privacy and the avoidance of cyberbullying. In our survey, a significant proportion of students (91.2%) showed comprehension of privacy issues, while 85.8% recognized the need to prevent cyberbullying. This suggests that, despite a lack of formal education in digital ethics in specific domains, students often demonstrate a robust ethical comprehension in digital environments, likely attributable to their heightened exposure to global digital communities via social media and mobile technology. Aguaded et al.

(2021) identified a deficiency in digital ethics education in impoverished areas, contending that students face challenges regarding ethical content dissemination and social media utilization despite significant ethical awareness. Our study revealed that material sharing requires enhancement, as only 84.4% of students exhibited robust ethical practices in the dissemination of digital content. This gap suggests that although students recognize ethical problems, the absence of systematic ethical training in their educational settings impedes their capacity to implement these principles consistently in all digital activities.

The digital safety analysis confirms that students demonstrate a robust comprehension of essential safety practices, including the use of strong passwords (90.2%), safeguarding personal data (90.2%), and prudent information sharing (92.6%). These results are encouraging, particularly given the paramount significance of digital safety in mitigating cyber dangers and safeguarding personal information in digital contexts. The research reveals opportunities for enhancement in authenticating information sources (85%) and conducting regular software updates (83%), both of which are essential for sustaining digital security. These findings are especially pertinent in higher education in affirmation areas, where students may lack the resources to apply digital safety precautions comprehensively. Students may be deprived of safe networks or devices with current security measures in numerous impoverished areas, increasing their vulnerability to cyber-attacks and data breaches. The diminished percentage of pupils participating in routine software updates and source verification indicates a proactive digital safety measures deficiency. Global research, like that of Li and Wei (2019), has underscored the necessity of incorporating digital safety training in curricula to give students the competencies required for

online self-protection. Research in Indonesia indicates that although students possess a high level of digital safety awareness, many do not regularly implement safety practices due to restricted access to resources (Arifah et al., 2021). This highlights the necessity for focused efforts to improve digital safety habits among kids in affirmation areas.

Salman et al. (2020) investigated digital literacy in developing nations, observing that pupils in impoverished areas frequently lack the requisite resources despite their awareness of digital safety to apply safety protocols effectively. This aligns with our study's findings, wherein students exhibited a considerable understanding of digital safety behaviours, including using robust passwords and safeguarding personal information. The diminished frequency of software updates (83%) and the difficulty in verifying information sources (85%) indicate that resource constraints in affirmation areas hinder students from fully participating in preventive digital safety practices. This corresponds with the conclusions of Salman et al. (2020), who discovered that although there is substantial awareness of digital safety, students in developing regions frequently do not consistently implement safety practices due to insufficient access to current tools and secure platforms.

The statistics on digital culture indicate that most students are adept at adapting to technological changes (86.2%) and cooperating using digital tools (78%). Moreover, a robust comprehension of cultural disparities (85.8%) and the facilitation of cross-cultural education (84%) is seen among the pupils. These findings indicate an increased recognition of the significance of cultural competence in the digital era, especially for language acquisition, since students are progressively interacting with global digital networks. The comparatively lower number of "participating in digital communities" (79.6%) indicates that although

students recognize digital cultural norms, they may not wholly engage in or contribute to global digital networks. This may result from restricted exposure to global digital communities in affirmation areas, where students predominantly engage within local or regional networks. The capacity to adjust to digital platforms and participate in cross-cultural education is crucial for promoting global citizenship, and this study corresponds with recent findings by Wang et al. (2021), which highlight the significance of cultural competence in digital learning contexts.

The research conducted by Wang et al. (2021) on digital cultural competence in EFL classrooms emphasizes the necessity of adjusting to technological innovations and engaging with digital tools. Wang et al. (2021) discovered that students engaged in global digital communities exhibited improved cultural awareness and proficiency in navigating digital platforms. Our research, which yielded a mean score of 82.7% for digital culture indicators, corroborates previous findings, particularly for adaptation to digital platforms (82.6%) and facilitation of cross-cultural learning (84%). The marginally lower percentage of students involved in digital communities (79.6%) indicates that, in affirmation areas. However, students recognize the significance of digital culture, and they may encounter constrained opportunities to participate in global digital networks, possibly due to limited internet access or insufficient exposure to international digital communities. This study enriches the literature on digital literacy by concentrating on EFL students in affirmation areas, where research on the nexus of digital literacy and English language acquisition is scarce. The results align with recent research emphasizing the significance of digital skills, ethics, safety, and culture in influencing students' involvement with digital technologies in education (Zhang, 2020). This research offers new insights into students' obstacles and opportunities in poor locations where access

to technology and digital resources is constrained. This research enhances current studies by concentrating on affirmation areas sometimes neglected in the global discourse on digital literacy. It underscores the necessity for specific interventions to rectify deficiencies in digital skills, ethics, safety, and culture among students in these areas.

CONCLUSION

This study's findings provide significant insights into EFL students' digital literacy, ethics, safety, and culture in higher education, especially in remote areas or undeveloped regions. The findings indicate that although students exhibit considerable digital proficiency in safeguarding personal data, upholding privacy, and employing digital tools for academic endeavours, significant deficiencies exist, particularly in utilizing Learning Management Systems (LMS), validating information sources, and consistently implementing digital safety measures. The disparities can be ascribed to restricted access to technology, insufficient infrastructure, and an absence of formal training in specific digital skills, which are prevalent obstacles students encounter in remote areas. Furthermore, the research reveals that students recognize ethical dilemmas in digital contexts, including social media engagement and cyberbullying, yet have difficulties continuously implementing these ethical principles throughout all digital interactions. This discovery illustrates the broader landscape of higher education in remote areas, where limited contact with global internet communities impedes students' comprehensive participation in the vast and linked realm of digital learning. The research underscores the necessity for specific interventions to enhance digital literacy education, particularly regarding LMS utilization, digital safety protocols, and cultivating a more resilient digital culture.

This research significantly advances English language learning in affirmation areas, indicating that although students exhibit proficiency in various aspects of digital competence, systemic challenges must be resolved to guarantee equitable access to technology and digital resources. The report emphasizes the necessity for institutions in Indonesia and analogous areas to incorporate complete digital literacy curricula that encompass both technological skills and ethical and safety considerations. This would ensure that pupils can navigate the digital realm responsibly and knowledgeably. Given these findings, subsequent research should investigate the effects of specialized digital literacy training programs and the influence of infrastructure enhancements on students' capacity to interact with digital learning platforms. Furthermore, longitudinal research may offer enhanced insights into the progression of digital literacy over time, especially as technology becomes increasingly embedded in the educational framework. Future research may examine the influence of cultural disparities on digital competency concerning language acquisition and intercultural communication in undeveloped areas. These studies would enhance the creation of more inclusive and effective digital learning frameworks for EFL students in marginalized environments.

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