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Mapping students' digital political literacy: implications for strengthening civic reasoning in Pancasila education

Yektie Nurprayoga LM[*)], Al Rafni, Hasrul Hasrul, Susi Fitria Dewi
Pancasila and Citizenship Education Study Program, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines political literacy among students at senior high school in the digital era across three dimensions: political knowledge, political skills, and ethical political attitudes, while exploring Pancasila Education's role in strengthening civic reasoning. A convergent mixed-methods design involved 82 students at SMA Negeri 4 Makassar completing surveys and objective test, complemented by semi-structured interviews with students and teachers. Findings show that 71.95% had low political knowledge (M=63.37; SD=21.97), whereas political skills (70.1%) and ethical political attitudes (64.5%) were classified as high. Bias/Framing identification achieved the highest score (72.5%), while information verification scored the lowest (66.5%). Qualitative findings indicate that social media is students' primary source of informal political learning, but exposure is not matched by adequate information verification skill or openness to differing perspectives. Strengthening civic reasoning therefore requires integrating critical, reflective, and participatory approaches into the Pancasila Education to promote more informed and ethical political engagement.

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Corresponding Author:

Yektie Nurprayoga LM.,
Universitas NegerI Padang
Email: prayoga@student.unp.ac.id

Introduction

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed how young people access political information, develop political understanding, and participate in democratic discourse (Yin, 2022). Social media has emerged as an informal political learning environment that increasingly influences adolescents' civic perspectives (Intyaswati et al., 2021). Generation Z's growing dependence on digital platforms for political information reflects this transformation (Nazlım & Özgen, 2025). However, exposure to misinformation, emotional narratives, and unverified political claims raises concerns about the quality of their political understanding (Bryanov & Vziatysheva, 2021). Although digital platforms expand opportunities for political engagement, frequent information exposure does not necessarily develop critical judgment. This condition highlights the importance of examining political literacy beyond digital participation, particularly among secondary school students preparing to exercise their democratic responsibilities.

The relationship between digital participation and political literacy remains theoretically contested. Participatory culture enables young people to actively construct and exchange political meanings through digital platforms (Jenkins & Jie, 2024). Conversely, algorithmic personalization and selective exposure may reinforce political bias and restrict encounters with alternative perspectives (Milli et al., 2025). Habermas (2023) further

emphasizes the challenges of fragmented digital public discourse for democratic deliberation. Empirical evidence indicates that political knowledge does not automatically ensure accurate evaluation of political information, particularly when motivated reasoning influences judgment (Kahne & Bowyer, 2017). Similarly, Breakstone et al. (2022) identified limitations in students' ability to evaluate online sources. These findings demonstrate the need to examine political literacy through interconnected dimensions of knowledge, critical skills, and ethical responsibility.

Political literacy provides a conceptual foundation for understanding students' democratic competencies in digital environments. Crick and Porter (1978) conceptualize political literacy through political knowledge, participatory skills, and ethical dispositions supporting responsible citizenship. These dimensions correspond with civic reasoning, which emphasizes evaluating evidence, considering competing perspectives, and constructing justified judgments on public issues (Lee et al., 2021). Civic online reasoning further specifies the importance of identifying information sources, examining supporting evidence, and verifying claims across digital platforms (McGrew et al., 2018). Research demonstrates that structured classroom instruction can improve students' online information evaluation skills (Wineburg et al., 2022). However, such improvements cannot be assumed from digital exposure alone. Integrating these perspectives provides a framework for examining students' political literacy and its educational implications without presuming causal relationships.

These challenges are particularly relevant in Indonesia, where young people's digital engagement increasingly intersects with democratic participation. Indonesia's digital literacy index indicates continuing limitations in critical digital competencies (Ranti et al., 2024). The demographic significance of Generation Z and first-time voters further emphasizes the importance of political education (Rosa, 2023; Mayrudin et al., 2025). Previous studies report substantial reliance on social media for political information alongside uneven political understanding and participation (Yanto & Sari, 2025; Muhajir et al., 2025; Casula & Wong, 2025). Limited information verification abilities also remain a concern among young digital citizens (Rafli, 2026). Although Pancasila Education offers opportunities to develop democratic knowledge and ethical responsibility, classroom practices may remain predominantly normative and insufficiently connected to contemporary political issues (Saud et al., 2023). These conditions underscore the importance of examining students' political literacy within their educational context.

Previous research has examined digital political engagement, but important conceptual and methodological limitations remain. Studies on civic online reasoning primarily emphasize information evaluation and verification skills (McGrew et al., 2018; Wineburg et al., 2022). Other investigations explore social media dependence and digital political participation (Yanto & Sari, 2025; Hasrullah et al., 2023; Nazlım & Özgen, 2025), while research on Pancasila Education addresses its relevance to citizenship learning (Wijaya & Amalia, 2024). However, these approaches provide limited integration of political knowledge, perceived political skills, and ethical political attitudes within a unified analytical framework. Furthermore, quantitative measurements alone may not adequately explain students' digital political experiences or teachers' pedagogical practices. Addressing this gap, the present study integrates multidimensional political literacy assessment with qualitative exploration to identify educational priorities for strengthening civic reasoning.

Accordingly, this study aims to map senior high school students' digital political literacy across political knowledge, perceived political skills, and ethical political attitudes, while examining its implications for civic reasoning in Pancasila Education. Using a convergent mixed-methods design, the research integrates quantitative assessments involving 82 students at SMA Negeri 4 Makassar with qualitative perspectives from students and teachers. Specifically, it investigates the distribution of political literacy dimensions, students' experiences with digital political information, and pedagogical opportunities for strengthening critical and ethical engagement. The study's novelty lies in combining multidimensional political literacy mapping with contextual interpretations of digital political learning within Pancasila Education. Rather than establishing instructional effectiveness or causal relationships, the findings are intended to provide an evidence-informed foundation for developing more critical, reflective, and participatory citizenship education.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine senior high school students' digital political literacy and its implications for civic reasoning. Consistent with the mixed-methods perspective outlined by Creswell (2017), the quantitative component mapped students' political knowledge, perceived political skills, and ethical political attitudes, while the qualitative component explored their experiences with digital political information and the pedagogical role of Pancasila Education. The two components provided complementary perspectives on the same educational phenomenon. This design

enabled the interpretation of statistical patterns alongside contextual accounts without assuming causal relationships between digital engagement, classroom practices, and political literacy outcomes.

Participants and Sampling

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 4 Makassar, Indonesia, involving 82 students selected through simple random sampling for the quantitative component. The participants represented the school-based population examined in this study rather than the broader population of Indonesian adolescents. The qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with students, Pancasila Education teachers, and supporting educational informants. Student interviews explored experiences associated with different levels of political literacy, while teacher interviews examined instructional practices and challenges in developing civic reasoning. The quantitative and qualitative participants contributed complementary information for understanding political literacy within the school's educational context.

Research Instruments

Quantitative data were collected using an objective political knowledge test and a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The objective test assessed students' understanding of democratic institutions, electoral processes, governance, and contemporary political issues. The questionnaire employed a Likert-type scale to examine perceived political skills and ethical political attitudes. Political skills included critical evaluation of information, identification of bias and framing, source verification, and evidence-based argumentation. Ethical political attitudes encompassed political engagement, openness to differing perspectives, and responsibility in digital communication. These dimensions were conceptually informed by the political literacy framework of Crick and Porter (1978). Because the questionnaire measured self-reported competencies, its results were interpreted as perceived political skills rather than direct evidence of demonstrated performance.

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews designed to explore students' political information practices and the educational experiences underlying their political literacy. Interviews addressed three principal areas: students' experiences in accessing and interpreting digital political information, differences in political literacy experiences, and teachers' instructional strategies for developing critical and ethical political engagement. The interviews also examined opportunities and challenges in integrating contemporary political issues into Pancasila Education. Following the qualitative inquiry perspective discussed by Fetterman (2023), participants' accounts were used to provide contextual explanations of educational experiences. Supporting documents, including learning objectives, the Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP), and instructional materials, were examined to contextualize the interview findings within the formal curriculum.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to identify patterns across the three political literacy dimensions. Political knowledge test scores were summarized using frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations, while questionnaire responses were examined through descriptive statistics and indicator-level achievement scores. These analyses were intended to describe the distribution of students' competencies and perceptions rather than establish causal relationships or statistically significant differences between groups. Qualitative interview data were examined through thematic interpretation, focusing on recurring patterns concerning social media use, information verification, political understanding, ethical engagement, and classroom learning practices. The interpretation emphasized connections between participants' experiences and the conceptual dimensions of political literacy.

Integration and Interpretation of Findings

The quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated at the interpretation stage to develop a contextual understanding of students' digital political literacy. Quantitative results identified patterns and differences across political knowledge, perceived political skills, and ethical political attitudes, while qualitative findings provided contextual explanations of students' experiences and teachers' pedagogical perspectives. Convergence and divergence between these sources were considered when interpreting the educational implications of the findings. Curriculum documents provided additional contextual evidence concerning the integration of political literacy into Pancasila Education. This interpretive integration supported the identification of potential pedagogical priorities for strengthening civic reasoning while acknowledging the descriptive, school-specific nature of the research.

Results and Discussions

Interpreting the role of digital democracy for the current generation raises several issues related to their capacity to use technology. Generation Z or high school students are a group that is greatly influenced by digital developments, but at the same time, they play a strategic role in addressing various impacts as a form of digital

citizenship. Randiawan et al. (2025) state that social media has created a foundation for the emergence of new forms of social organization that are horizontal in nature, which have the potential to reshape existing political and economic structures. The concept of digital citizenship needs to be continuously discussed and examined comprehensively in academic studies. Analysis of political education programs organized by formal state institutions, such as the KPU, Bawaslu, and Kemendikbudristek, shows that there is still a tendency toward technocratic and proceduralistic approaches (Ivancsyah, 2025). Therefore, guidance is needed so that students can implement the updated political literacy skills they receive, enabling them to utilize the digital era wisely, critically, and responsibly, and not easily get involved in the spread of hoaxes or hate speech.

Inclusive political education has strategic potential to foster political literacy in the digital era. In this context, Pancasila Education integrated with the use of social media can become a relevant learning tool, considering that social media has become one of the main sources of information for high school students. Through this approach, political education does not stop at the delivery of knowledge, but also opens up spaces for dialog, exchange of views, and direct involvement in various political issues that are close to students' lives. Citizenship education needs to foster three aspects of digital resilience shaped by personality and environment: digital citizenship, digital resilience, and digital ethics. Rahmawati and Purwaningrum (2025) found that ethical digital citizenship (EDC) is positively correlated with online safety and digital resilience, suggesting that ethical competence not only reduces risk but also strengthens adolescents' ability to manage and recover from negative online experiences.

This research provides a mapping of political literacy abilities across three dimensions: (1) political knowledge, including the functions of state institutions, the electoral system, democracy and governance, as well as current political issues; (2) political skills, including critical thinking, evaluation and credibility of information, identification of bias/framing, verification of social media information, ability to compare information, and data-based argumentation; and (3) political ethical attitudes, including involvement in political activities, openness in expressing opinions, and political responsibility in the digital era. This research also explores students' perceptions of their political literacy skills and the teachers' interventions in the strengthening process.

Research findings indicate that high school students still struggle to understand political content on social media, influenced by how algorithms work and by their limited knowledge of the functions of state institutions. Therefore, the integration of digital issues into the pedagogy of Pancasila Education is necessary so that students can critically understand information and participate actively, ethically, and responsibly in the digital public space. These findings underscore the need of update the curriculum and teaching methods to be more active, innovative, and contextual in the 21st century, in order to encourage meaningful engagement of high school students in political education, as mandated by Law Number 2 of 2011 on Political Parties.

Descriptive Analysis of Students' Political Literacy Skills in the Digital Era

Table 1 provides an interpretation of high school students' political literacy in the digital era. The results show that 71.95% of students have low political knowledge, indicating that students still have minimal understanding of the functions of state institutions, the system of government and democracy, or current political issues; strengthening this knowledge can be achieved through formal education. There are also 19.51% of students with very adequate political knowledge as an initial capital for the creation of the political education learning process. Furthermore, students have relatively moderate political skills, with 29.3% in the low category and 22.0% in the very high category.

Table 1. Level of Political Literacy Aspects in the Digital Era

Main Indicator	Very Low	Low	High	Very High	Total (%)
Political Knowledge	0%	71.95%	8.54%	19.51%	100%
Political Skills	1.2%	29.3%	47.6%	22.0%	100%
Ethical Political Attitudes	8.5%	34.1%	37.8%	19.5%	100%

Based on Table 1, students show that the understanding they gain mostly comes from social media as an initial bridge in receiving political issues and participating in politics in the digital era. In the aspect of skills such as critical thinking and the ability to analyze political information on social media, students as a generation living in the technological era show a very high achievement of 22.0%, while high achievement reaches 47.6%. However, the ability to identify bias and negative framing on social media shows a very low achievement, namely only 1.2%. Students or Generation Z are very active on social media, but their ability to engage in "digital politics" is still limited (Jati, 2024).

In the aspect of political ethical attitudes, a quite striking difference is evident: 19.5% of students fall into the very high category, while 34.1% fall into the low category. Subindicators of political involvement, openness in expressing opinions, and political responsibility reflect different patterns, resulting in a contrasting picture

among students. The dominance of the high category at 37.8% indicates that this participation does not yet fully reflect the expected success in political ethical attitudes, such as playing a role as decision-makers in learning spaces that discuss political issues or fulfilling responsibilities as students and citizens. Overall, high school students' political literacy in the digital era is not yet fully consistent and evenly distributed across all achievement indicators. This condition may be influenced by the limited political knowledge acquired in the school learning environment, at home, or in the students' surroundings, low self-confidence in expressing views, and concerns about mockery or negative responses from social media users, leading some students to choose an apolitical stance on certain issues. These findings underscore the importance of fostering students' national awareness and creating safe, open, and inclusive political discussion spaces so that students can express their opinions critically, ethically, and responsibly with greater confidence. The following section elaborates in more detail on the achievements of each indicator and sub-indicator of students' political literacy in the digital era.

Figure 1 presents a comparison of the achievements of three dimensions of political literacy among high school students in the digital era based on measurements from 82 respondents. The political skills dimension shows the highest achievement at 70.10%, followed by the political knowledge dimension at 65.37%, and the political ethical attitude dimension at 64.50%. This pattern indicates that relatively, high school students excel more in skills aspects, such as critical thinking, evaluating the credibility of information, and identifying bias on social media, compared to the aspects of conceptual understanding of the political system or readiness to act ethically in the digital political realm. The achievement gap between the two dimensions, which is not too wide (ranging from 65.37% to 70.10%), also indicates that the disparity between the two dimensions is moderate, not extremely pronounced.

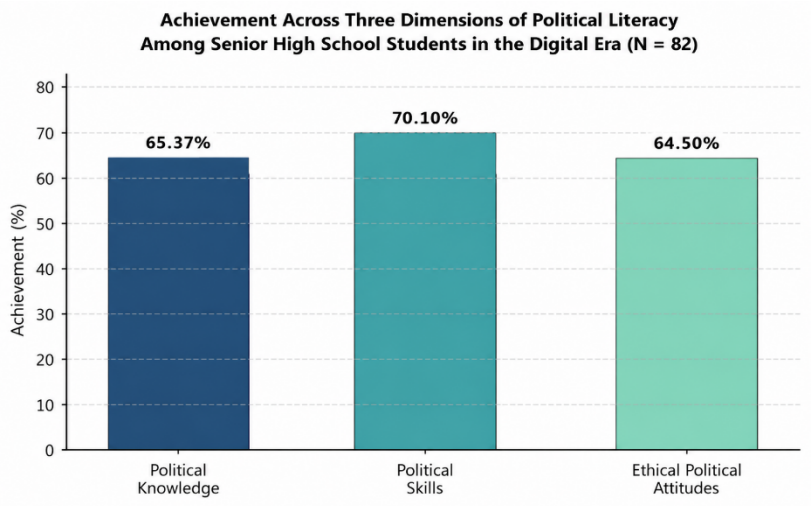


Figure 1. Political Literacy Achievement of High School Students in the Digital Era

Nevertheless, the three achievements overall still fall within the medium range (below 75%), indicating that high school students' political literacy in the digital era has not yet reached an optimal level in any dimension. These findings should be interpreted not as a systemic failure, but rather as a map of intervention needs: the high achievement in political skills indicates an initial capital that can be optimized through more structured learning, while the relatively lower achievements in knowledge and political ethical attitudes suggest the need to strengthen the delivery of conceptual material about state institutions and to cultivate deliberative attitudes and digital responsibility. Thus, Figure 1 emphasizes that strengthening digital-era political literacy through Pancasila Education needs to be designed multidimensionally, not focusing on just one aspect, so that the three dimensions, knowledge, skills, and ethical political attitudes, can develop in a balanced manner and support each other within the framework of civic reasoning.

Table 2 shows that out of 82 students, the majority (71.95% or 59 students) scored in the low category (interval 0-75) for political knowledge, while only 8.54% (7 students) fell into the high category and 19.51% (16 students) into the very high category. This distribution shows an uneven and polarized pattern: the majority of students still have minimal understanding of the electoral system, state institutions, and current political issues, while a small group of students have mastered these subjects very well, indicating a significant conceptual mastery gap among high school students.

Table 2. Measurement of Political Knowledge Indicator Aspects through Objective Tests

Score Interval	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
0–75	Low	59	71.95%
80–85	High	7	8.54%
90–100	Very High	16	19.51%
Total	All Samples	82	100.00%

Table 3 presents a descriptive statistical overview of political knowledge among 82 students, with a mean score of 65.37 and a median of 70.00. The significant difference between the mean and median indicates a negatively skewed data distribution, meaning that some students with low scores pull the average down below the median. A standard deviation of 21.97 is considered high, indicating a wide variation in achievement among students, as reflected in the large score range between the minimum score (15) and the maximum score (100). The average correct answers of 13.07 out of the total objective test items further confirms that, in general, students are only able to answer a small to moderate portion of the questions correctly, thereby reinforcing the findings in Table 2 that high school students' mastery of political knowledge in the digital era is still heterogeneous and uneven.

Table 3. Tabulation Results of Political Knowledge Aspect Data

Statistic	Value
N	82
Mean Score	65.37
Median	70.00
Standard Deviation (s)	21.97
Minimum Score	15
Maximum Score	100
Mean Number of Correct Answers	13.07

The results of the interpretation of political knowledge are dominated by the low category (71.95%). This indicates that the majority of students have not yet achieved mastery of political knowledge according to the criteria used in the research. At the same time, the presence of 16 students (19.51%) in the very high category, with a score range of 15–100 and a standard deviation of 21.97, indicates a significant heterogeneity in achievement. This pattern indicates a gap in conceptual mastery among high school students on the topics of the electoral system and political parties, the political system, governance and democracy, as well as current political issues in the digital era.

Achievement of Students' Political Skills and Ethical Attitudes

Table 4 shows that overall aspects of high school students' political skills are at 70.1% (mean 2.80; SD 0.52), placing them in the high category. The subindicator of bias/framing identification recorded the highest achievement (72.5%), while information verification showed the lowest achievement (66.5%), indicating that students are more capable of recognizing bias in political content than of tracing the truth of information back to its original source. These findings affirm that students' political skills are generally quite good, but the aspects of verification and data-based argumentation still require further strengthening.

Table 4. Analysis of Political Literacy Items in the Digital Era Based on Political Skills Indicators

Sub-Indicator	Mean	Standard Deviation	Achievement
Critical Thinking Skills	2.84	0.75	70.9%
Evaluation of Information Credibility	2.87	0.66	71.8%
Identification of Bias/Framing	2.90	0.45	72.5%
Information Verification	2.66	0.58	66.5%
Ability to Compare Information	2.78	0.94	69.5%
Data-Based Argumentation	2.72	0.75	68.0%
Overall Political Skills Aspect	2.80	0.52	70.1%

Based on the analysis results in Table 4, the sub-indicator of bias/framing identification shows the highest mean value (2.90; SD = 0.45), indicating that social media as the main channel of political discourse is quite helpful for students in recognizing bias and negative framing in the political news or information they receive. Nevertheless, social media can enhance critical awareness, but more systematic educational interventions are still needed to develop these skills optimally. The sub-indicator of critical thinking ability has a mean of 2.84 (SD = 0.75), in line with the highest achievement. The sub-indicator of information evaluation and credibility reaches a mean of 2.87 (SD = 0.66) as the second highest achievement, which confirms that high school students,

as part of Generation Z, have the ability to navigate the flow of political information changes as digital natives. The positive contribution of social media can be linked to exposure to diverse perspectives and political discussions available on various platforms (Yanto & Sari, 2025).

Based on the descriptive statistical analysis in Table 5, the subindicator of involvement in political activities received the highest average score (2.61; achievement 65.2%). These findings indicate that compared to other sub-indicators of ethical attitudes, students are relatively more willing to engage, respond, or take roles in political activities, which also suggests a political awareness as a form of political efficacy. However, the distribution is not uniform, as seen from the standard deviation of 0.69, the highest among the three sub-indicators of political ethical attitudes, indicating that some students have relatively strong engagement, while others tend to be passive. This condition needs to be understood specifically because digital participation does not always reflect substantive political engagement; actions that are easy for students to perform, such as liking, sharing, and commenting on political content on social media, can be an initial form of participation, but require special attention if not accompanied by critical consideration and democratic responsibility. Guerola-Navarro et al. (2023) emphasize that the changing forms of participation in the digital space need to be balanced with media literacy so that citizen engagement develops into active, critical, and meaningful participation.

Table 5. Analysis of Political Literacy Items in the Digital Era Based on Political Ethical Attitude Indicators

Sub-Indicator	Mean	Standard Deviation	Achievement
Involvement in Political Activities	2.61	0.69	65.2%
Openness in Expressing Opinions	2.54	0.66	63.6%
Political Responsibility in the Digital Era	2.59	0.61	64.8%
Overall Political Ethical Attitude	2.58	0.59	64.5%

On the subindicator of open-mindedness, a mean of 2.54 (SD = 0.66) was obtained, which is the lowest achievement despite the moderate difference. Descriptively, these results indicate that high school students find it easier to show political engagement compared to demonstrating openness in the thinking process or exchange of views. This openness is not just about the courage to express opinions, but also includes the willingness to listen to and consider different arguments, as well as respecting others' rights to have political choices. The low achievement on this sub-indicator indicates that the deliberative dimension in students' political attitudes still needs strengthening, given that citizenship education aims not only to shape citizens who can speak, but also citizens who possess civic disposition.

Understanding political literacy in the digital era demands responsibility in the public sphere, which has now shifted to the digital realm. Habermas (2023) reminds us that the transformation of the public sphere into the digital realm also brings risks of fragmentation of public discourse, the spread of misinformation, and the formation of "echo chambers" due to algorithmic curation on digital platforms. This shift is what makes political literacy in the digital era a crucial ability in contemporary democracy. In the context of Indonesia, strengthening digital ethics is considered important to prevent provocative political interactions, conflicts, and polarization on social media (Randiawan et al., 2025). Political literacy is not only a tool of liberation but also a form of resistance against the banality of lies and the banality of power (Amoah-Ramey, N. A., 2026).

The results of the analysis of the political responsibility sub-indicator in the digital era show a mean of 2.59 with a standard deviation of 0.61. This smaller standard deviation indicates that students' responses to this sub-indicator are more concentrated around the average, suggesting that awareness of the importance of responsible political behavior has begun to form more consistently, although it has not yet reached an optimal level. Citizens with strong digital-era political literacy will be better able of search for, access, evaluate the truth of, and responsibly use political information in the digital space, making them more prepared to be part of an active and rational public sphere (Afhiani et al., 2024). Overall, students' political ethical attitudes obtained a mean of 2.58, a standard deviation of 0.59, and an achievement of 64.5%, which, based on research criteria, falls into the high category. However, this high category does not mean that students' political ethical attitudes have developed to their maximum; the achievement of 64.5% reflects the position of the score against the ideal score of the instrument, not the percentage of students who have developed political ethical attitudes. Therefore, these results are more accurately interpreted as a positive trend that still leaves room to strengthen learning in schools.

Overall of the results of digital-era political literacy research show that political literacy education is not sufficient to merely provide knowledge about institutions, elections, political systems, and governance. Learning needs to present structured discussions of controversial issues, fact-checking exercises, argument analysis, perspective-taking, and reflection on the ethical consequences of the production and dissemination of political content. Kahne and Bowyer (2017) found that political knowledge alone is insufficient to help young people accurately assess partisan information, whereas media literacy learning experiences provide more meaningful

support in distinguishing evidence-based information from misinformation. Therefore, strengthening political ethical attitudes needs to integrate political knowledge, media literacy, deliberation skills, and digital citizenship responsibility. Conceptually, this should focus on strengthening civic reasoning through learning strategies, teaching materials, and teacher competencies in the subject of Pancasila Education, in collaboration with the subject of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), both in formal school settings and among students.

Political Literacy in the Digital Era as a Strengthening of Civic Reasoning

Table 4 shows that overall aspects of high school students' political skills are at 70.1% (mean 2.80; SD 0.52), placing them in the high category. The subindicator of bias/framing identification recorded the highest achievement (72.5%), while information verification showed the lowest achievement (66.5%), indicating that students are relatively more capable of recognizing bias in political content compared to tracing the truth of information back to its original source. These findings affirm that students' political skills are generally quite good, but the aspects of verification and data-based argumentation still require further strengthening.

This study draws on insights from students, teachers, and education practitioners through interviews within a qualitative framework to analyze the challenges and opportunities for enhancing digital political literacy among high school students through the subject of Pancasila Education. The interviews were conducted using source triangulation techniques from several informants who provided insights into their experiences in obtaining political education, interest and engagement with political issues, learning interventions to design strategies for strengthening political understanding, critical information evaluation, and active participation, as well as the role of teachers in strengthening students' political literacy in the digital era to realize civic reasoning.

Interviews revealed students' abilities within the framework of thinking, showing how they comprehend political knowledge, political skills, and ethical political attitudes in the digital era. These findings reveal a significant gap between students' understanding and implementation of political literacy in the digital era. Teacher and practitioner informants explained relevant learning activities, adding pedagogical tools to strengthen and prepare student participation in learning activities. In-depth interviews sought not only to understand why students are enthusiastic or tend to be passive toward political literacy, but also to interpret the extent to which they acquire political literacy skills and understand the conditions of the digital era in relation to contemporary politics.

These findings serve as a strategic consideration in formulating an adaptive Pancasila Education curriculum that aligns with emerging issues, while also designing the readiness of students or Generation Z to address the challenges of political literacy in the digital era, integrated with digital citizenship skills. Table 6 below presents a summary of these qualitative findings, including four main themes: students' views on political literacy in the digital era, the challenges faced, achievements in skills and ethical political attitudes, and the role of teachers in strengthening strategies.

Table 6. Summary of Qualitative Findings on Political Literacy

Theme	Interview Findings
Students' views on political literacy in the digital era	Students have understood the importance of political literacy in the digital era and agree that this understanding is crucial to avoid being easily swayed by hoaxes, hate speech, and polarization circulating on social media. The majority of students believe that the ability to understand, filter, and critically analyze political information is the main asset for becoming a citizen in the 21st century.
Challenges in political literacy in the digital era	Students still face challenges in evaluating the credibility of information on social media; information is often accepted without a verification process regarding the validity of the source, the accuracy of the content, or the context of the delivery. Hoaxes, misinformation, and the role of buzzers have become dominant factors that blur the line between fact and opinion. Pancasila education in schools is not yet fully aligned with students' digital literacy needs of students.
Political skills and ethical attitudes in the digital era	Participation in online political discussions is not only determined by interest but also by the individual's readiness to express their views confidently and responsibly. Students show interest in participating in online discussions, but the lack of information and understanding of the issues being discussed makes them hesitant to voice their opinions. The political engagement of Generation Z

Theme	Interview Findings
	shows a pattern of increasingly open, rapid, and independent participation through social media.
The role of teachers in the strategy to strengthen political literacy in the digital era	Strengthening political literacy is implemented integratively in the Pancasila Education subject, covering the study of political democracy as well as the rights and obligations of citizens. The strategies developed include digital literacy education, counseling/training, and collaboration with influencers. The case study method with policy issues close to students' lives is considered effective: students are guided to understand the problem, examine information sources, compare evidence, engage in group discussions, and formulate recommendations based on responsible argumentation.

Political literacy education is no longer adequate if it relies solely on conventional instructional models that demand memorization, passivity, or procedural understanding of state institutions and the democratic system in elections. The paradigm of civic education needs to shift from a normative-instructive approach to a reflective-critical and participatory approach (Salsabila et al., 2024). Digital civic education and critical pedagogy should be at the core of the current citizenship curriculum, not just an addition, in order to enhance high school students' civic reasoning in understanding societal issues. Jenkins and Jie (2024) put forward a similar argument through the concept of participatory culture, which suggests that digital citizens should not merely consume information but also actively produce meaning in the digital space.

Research findings affirm that Pancasila Education plays an important role in enhancing students' political understanding and awareness, especially for first-time voters. However, the findings also show that students or Generation Z actually follow political developments, but at a still low level because they only receive information on social media. This condition emphasizes the need for teaching that directly connects Pancasila Education with the issues of the Indonesian nation (Cahya & Nasiwan, 2024). High school students are very interested in viral political content that they consume daily, which has the potential to reduce critical thinking skills and affect the accuracy of the information received. Hamisa and Murdiono (2018) support this view by asserting that Pancasila and Citizenship Education can equip students with critical, rational, and creative thinking skills in both political contexts and school organizational activities.

Social Media and Political Knowledge in the Digital Era

Table 4 shows that overall aspects of high school students' political skills are at 70.1% (mean 2.80; SD 0.52), placing them in the high category. The subindicator of bias/framing identification recorded the highest achievement (72.5%), while information verification showed the lowest achievement (66.5%), indicating that students are relatively more capable of recognizing bias in political content compared to tracing the truth of information back to its original source. These findings affirm that students' political skills are generally quite good, but the aspects of verification and data-based argumentation still require further strengthening.

Various literature offers different understandings of political knowledge. Political knowledge is conceptualized as a collection of actual political information stored in long-term memory, which emphasizes that knowledge is an essential factor that aids successful political engagement, and that citizens at least need to have a basic understanding of the political system where they express their preferences and determine their political representatives. Based on this definition, political knowledge is viewed as one of the important variables in political science that plays a role in the decision-making process by linking fundamental political values with policy choices. Social media, as one of the main channels for political learning, plays an important role in facilitating political participation (Zempi et al., 2022).

Studies on the relationship between social media and political literacy skills provide strong evidence, as shown in the research by Hasrullah et al. (2023), which demonstrates the profound influence of digital literacy and social media engagement on political participation. The findings of this research indicate that students acquire political knowledge from social media and can freely engage in digital political participation. In line with this, Dimitrova et al. (2014) show that the use of digital media in general has only a small effect on political learning, but certain forms of digital media have a significant impact on political participation. Although social media impacts the increase in political knowledge, students still need to be equipped with digital citizenship competencies. This view is in line with the findings of Randiawan et al. (2025). Digital citizenship essentially involves understanding the opportunities and responsibilities in the digital era, so that citizens become knowledgeable and digitally literate, especially in political life.

Susanto, as quoted by Zempi et al. (2023), in his research on the relationship between social media and politics, found that the use of social media as a political source varies based on political stratification. There are

six layers of political stratification, namely: (1) proximate decision maker, (2) influential, (3) activist, (4) attentive public, (5) voters, and (6) non-participating groups. These six layers utilize social media differently, according to their respective needs and interests. The proximate decision maker, influential, and activist layers are categorized as groups that use political knowledge through social media to maintain or obtain political or public positions, as seen from their tendency to act as message organizers and public opinion shapers on social media. Meanwhile, the attentive public, voters, and non-participant groups are individuals or community groups that use social media as a source of political information. The position of students in this study falls within the group of information recipients who provide feedback in the form of support while also reinforcing opinions toward political entities outside their group, specifically within the stratification of the attentive public, voters, and non-participant groups.

Critical Pedagogical Approach to Citizenship Education as a Strengthening of Political Literacy in the Digital Era

Civic education enhances the political literacy of high school students and contributes to higher political participation, such as in elections. A structured approach provides a clear framework to deepen the dimensions of students' political literacy in the digital era, as it becomes a permanent part of the school and college curriculum with a broader scope. The focus on building political awareness and participation makes it relevant for enhancing political literacy and activism. Through this education, high school students develop critical attitudes, consider various perspectives on political issues, and become more actively involved in political activities. Neundorf in Farikiansyah et al. (2024) found a strong relationship between civic education in youth and the level of political skills in adulthood. Political literacy built through citizenship education in schools, particularly the subject of Pancasila Education, helps students or Generation Z better understand the political process and encourages the enhancement of political literacy as active citizens.

Teachers and policymakers pay special attention to students' need for reliable sources of information to understand political issues. This view is in line with the study by Prasetyo & Sunarso (2026), which emphasizes that political education in educational settings plays a crucial role in building democratic awareness among students. Hasrullah et al. (2023) also found that digital literacy contributes to the construction of political education through the ability to understand and use digital media effectively and contributes to online political participation, although the context does not specifically examine high school students. Political literacy in the digital era faces challenges because information spreads quickly, but is not always accurate. Hoaxes, misinformation, and political polarization on social media can influence students' perceptions and political attitudes. The educational approach needs to be directed to meet the demands of the times, especially Pancasila Education, which needs to shift from merely understanding theoretical concepts to strengthening students' abilities in evaluating information and digital literacy. Bulya and Izzati (2024) found that low digital literacy is one of the major obstacles in maintaining the quality of political participation in the digital era. Students advocate for an approach that incorporates social issue projects into the curriculum to enhance theoretical knowledge while also fostering real engagement in civic activities.

Theoretically, this research affirms the relevance of Freire's critical pedagogy (2020), Crick & Porter's political literacy theory (1978), and digital citizenship competencies in designing political literacy education that is more responsive to contemporary social dynamics. This research provides a significant theoretical contribution in addressing the new paradigm of citizenship education oriented toward the values of social responsibility, critical attitudes, and political ethics. Practically, these findings provide strategic direction for educators, curriculum designers, government institutions, and communities to develop political literacy enhancement education that aligns with the digital landscape. Schools, as institutions capable of preparing for this from an early stage, must not shirk their responsibility in addressing the changes in the political learning ecosystem.

The results of the survey on high school students are not merely numerical interpretations, but rather a foundation for the continuous renewal of Pancasila Education learning, so that pedagogical practices are continuously adjusted to the needs of students or Generation Z, thereby providing deeper meaning to the learning process. These findings can serve as a reference for the government, particularly the Ministry of Education, political parties, and election organizers, to restructure the direction of political and citizenship education to be more responsive to digital information and capable of mitigating echo chambers. There are two policy steps that can be taken. First, digital media-based political literacy and deliberative values need to be incorporated into the national Pancasila Education curriculum. Second, schools, universities, media, and non-governmental organizations need to be encouraged to collaborate in building critical and participatory democratic education. Supporting this finding, Hasanah and Nurha (2025) emphasize the need for media education and digital literacy so that learners can actively engage in information analysis and participate in the digital realm. The research by Arifuddin and Hermawan (2025) also explains that political education has a strategic direction as a means to foster critical and inclusive democratic awareness, but its effectiveness is highly

determined by its ability to intervene in the way citizens think, participate, and verify information in the digital public space.

This argument is further strengthened by previous studies that show that an educational framework based on the Pancasila value system and citizenship can help develop digital skills, along with citizen engagement as a form of students' political awareness. Integrating Pancasila values into digital learning facilitates students' civic responsibility, namely the development of information verification skills and critical thinking (Virgiawan & Sundawa, 2022; Yanto & Sari, 2025). Strengthening Pancasila Education opens up opportunities for more interactive learning, such as through discussions, policy simulations, class projects, or digital campaigns about citizen responsibilities. Involvement in student organizations can also enhance political participation; schools can support the formation of organizations focused on political and social issues, where students learn to collaborate and advocate for issues they consider important (Al-Ra'zie et al., 2026). This method trains students' citizenship skills and encourages them to be more active in community life.

Conclusions

This study reveals an uneven profile of digital political literacy among senior high school students, characterized by limited political knowledge despite relatively stronger perceived political skills and ethical political attitudes. Although social media serves as a primary source of political information, students continue to experience difficulties in verifying information, critically evaluating political claims, and engaging with diverse perspectives. These findings highlight the importance of integrating political knowledge, critical evaluation skills, and ethical responsibility within Pancasila Education to strengthen civic reasoning. The study contributes a multidimensional understanding of students' political literacy by combining quantitative assessments with qualitative insights into their digital experiences and classroom learning. Accordingly, Pancasila Education should emphasize contextual, reflective, and participatory learning approaches that encourage evidence-based reasoning, informed political judgment, and responsible digital citizenship. Given its school-specific and non-experimental design, the findings provide a basis for pedagogical improvement rather than evidence of instructional effectiveness or causal relationships.

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