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Transformation of Social Studies Education Based on Digital Citizenship in Shaping the Social Character of Generation Z in the Era of Society 5.0

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the transformation of Social Studies education based on digital citizenship in shaping the social character of Generation Z within the framework of Society 5.0. The research is motivated by the increasing influence of digital environments on students' social behavior and the need for educational adaptation to support responsible civic development in the digital era. The study applies a quantitative explanatory design using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to analyze the relationships between digital citizenship-based Social Studies education, Society 5.0 learning environments, and Generation Z's social character. Data were collected from Generation Z students through structured questionnaires measuring digital citizenship competencies, perceptions of the learning environment, and social character indicators such as responsibility, tolerance, collaboration, and civic awareness. The results indicate that digital citizenship-based Social Studies education has a significant positive effect on students' social character. In addition, the Society 5.0 learning environment strengthens this relationship by providing a human-centered digital ecosystem that supports interactive and value-based learning. The model demonstrates strong explanatory power, confirming that educational transformation plays a crucial role in shaping students' civic and social behavior. The findings highlight that integrating digital citizenship into Social Studies education is essential for developing socially responsible and ethically aware learners. This integration enables students to navigate digital spaces more critically while maintaining strong social values. The study contributes to educational discourse by offering an integrated model of Social Studies transformation aligned with the demands of Society 5.0 and the characteristics of Generation Z.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid acceleration of digital transformation in contemporary society has fundamentally reshaped the way individuals learn, interact, and construct social values. In the era of Society 5.0, technological advancement is no longer viewed merely as a tool for efficiency, but as an integrated system that centers human life while simultaneously addressing complex social challenges through digital innovation. This paradigm shift places education at the core of societal transformation, particularly in disciplines such as Social Studies education, which is responsible for cultivating civic knowledge, ethical awareness, and socially responsible behavior among learners. As societies become increasingly digitalized, the role of education in shaping civic identity and social character becomes more complex and urgent.

One of the most significant transformations in the educational landscape is the emergence of Generation Z as the dominant learner demographic. This generation, often

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referred to as digital natives, has grown up in an environment saturated with digital technologies, social media platforms, and instant access to information. Their cognitive, social, and behavioral development is strongly influenced by digital ecosystems that shape how they perceive the world and engage with others. Research indicates that Generation Z tends to exhibit high levels of digital fluency, rapid information processing, and strong engagement in online communication networks, yet simultaneously faces challenges related to information overload, reduced critical filtering, and vulnerability to misinformation. These characteristics make the formation of strong social character and civic responsibility increasingly complex in digital environments.

In this context, Social Studies education holds a strategic role in shaping students' understanding of society, governance, and citizenship. Traditionally, Social Studies education has focused on transmitting knowledge about social systems, historical events, and civic institutions. However, in the current digital era, this traditional approach is no longer sufficient. Students must not only understand social concepts but also be able to apply civic values in digital environments where interactions are continuous, borderless, and often unregulated. Therefore, Social Studies education must undergo transformation to remain relevant to the needs of contemporary learners and the demands of Society 5.0.

A key dimension of this transformation is the integration of digital citizenship into educational practice. Digital citizenship refers to the responsible, ethical, and informed use of digital technologies in social participation, communication, and knowledge construction. It includes competencies such as digital literacy, online ethics, critical thinking, and civic engagement in digital spaces (Rais et al., 2025). Within educational settings, digital citizenship serves as a framework for preparing learners to participate responsibly in both offline and online civic life. Studies show that integrating digital citizenship into civic education enhances students' awareness of ethical behavior, strengthens their ability to evaluate information critically, and improves their engagement in democratic participation.

The relevance of digital citizenship becomes even more pronounced when viewed through the lens of Generation Z's learning environment. As students increasingly rely on digital platforms for communication, learning, and social interaction, their social behavior is continuously shaped by digital norms and algorithm-driven content exposure. Without proper guidance, this can lead to fragmented identity formation and weakened social values. Therefore, embedding digital citizenship within Social Studies education is essential to ensure that students develop not only cognitive understanding but also ethical awareness and social responsibility in digital spaces (Yuniarto & Yudha, 2021; Soffi et al., 2025).

In Indonesia and similar educational contexts, efforts to integrate digital literacy and civic education have begun to emerge as part of broader educational reforms. These reforms aim to strengthen students' civic competencies and prepare them for participation in a rapidly evolving digital society. However, most implementations still focus on surface-level digital skills rather than deeper civic and ethical engagement. As a result, there is a gap between technological competence and social character formation, which limits the effectiveness of current Social Studies education in shaping responsible digital citizens.

The concept of Society 5.0 further reinforces the urgency of this transformation. Society 5.0 envisions a human-centered society that integrates advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data with human values to solve social problems and improve quality of life (Ahmad et al., 2023). In this framework, education is expected to produce individuals who are not only technologically capable but also ethically grounded and socially responsible. Social Studies education, therefore, must evolve to align with this vision by incorporating digital citizenship principles that foster critical thinking, empathy, and civic responsibility in digital environments.

Despite growing attention to digital literacy and civic education, existing literature reveals a lack of integrated frameworks that connect Social Studies education, digital citizenship, and the formation of Generation Z's social character within the Society 5.0 paradigm. Previous studies have often examined these elements separately: digital literacy

research tends to focus on technical competencies; civic education studies emphasize political awareness; while Generation Z studies primarily explore behavioral tendencies in digital environments. This fragmentation limits the development of a comprehensive understanding of how educational transformation can shape social character in a digitally mediated society.

Furthermore, although digital citizenship has been widely recognized as an important educational construct, its implementation in Social Studies education remains inconsistent. Many educational programs still treat digital citizenship as an auxiliary topic rather than an integral part of civic education. This results in a disconnect between theoretical frameworks and classroom practices. As a consequence, students may acquire knowledge about civic values but fail to internalize and apply them in digital interactions, which are increasingly central to their social lives.

This study addresses these gaps by proposing an integrated perspective that positions digital citizenship as a core component of Social Studies education in shaping the social character of Generation Z. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to synthesize three major domains: educational transformation in Social Studies, digital citizenship frameworks, and the sociocultural characteristics of Generation Z within the Society 5.0 context. Unlike previous studies that isolate these variables, this research conceptualizes them as interconnected dimensions of a unified educational transformation process.

By doing so, the study contributes to both theoretical and practical discussions in educational transformation. Theoretically, it expands the discourse on civic education by integrating digital citizenship as a central mechanism for character formation. Practically, it provides insights for educators and policymakers on how Social Studies education can be redesigned to meet the demands of digital society. In particular, it emphasizes the importance of embedding ethical digital behavior, civic responsibility, and social awareness into learning processes that are relevant to Generation Z learners.

Therefore, this research aims to examine how Social Studies education based on digital citizenship contributes to the formation of Generation Z's social character in the era of Society 5.0. It seeks to analyze the role of digital citizenship in educational transformation, explore its impact on students' social behavior, and develop an integrated conceptual understanding of how civic education can adapt to the challenges and opportunities of digital society.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative explanatory research design aimed at examining the influence of digital citizenship-based Social Studies education on the social character formation of Generation Z within the context of Society 5.0. The selection of this design is grounded in the need to empirically test theoretical relationships among educational transformation variables, digital civic competencies, and behavioral outcomes in a structured and measurable manner. Quantitative explanatory research is particularly suitable for investigating latent constructs such as civic awareness, digital ethics, and social character because it enables statistical modeling of relationships among variables derived from educational and sociological theories.

The research procedure is carried out through a series of systematic stages beginning from preliminary preparation to final interpretation of results. These stages are designed to ensure methodological rigor and conceptual alignment with digital citizenship and Society 5.0 educational frameworks.

1. Preliminary Stage: Problem Identification and Theoretical Mapping

The initial stage of the research involves identifying the core research problem, which centers on the limited integration of digital citizenship within Social Studies education and its implications for shaping the social character of Generation Z. This stage includes an extensive literature review focusing on digital citizenship, civic education transformation, Generation Z digital behavior, and Society 5.0 educational paradigms. The literature synthesis reveals that although digital literacy and civic education have been widely discussed, their integration into

a unified model of social character formation remains underdeveloped (Rais et al., 2025; Yuniarto & Yudha, 2021).

The theoretical mapping process establishes conceptual linkages among three primary constructs: digital citizenship-based learning, Social Studies education transformation, and Generation Z social character formation. This mapping is informed by Society 5.0 principles that emphasize human-centered technological integration in education systems.

2. Instrument Development Stage

Following the theoretical mapping, the research proceeds to the development of research instruments. A structured questionnaire is designed to measure three main constructs: digital citizenship-based Social Studies education, Generation Z social character, and the contextual influence of Society 5.0 learning environments. Each construct is operationalized into measurable indicators derived from previous studies on civic literacy, digital ethics, and educational transformation.

Digital citizenship indicators include digital ethics, responsible online participation, critical information evaluation, and civic engagement in digital spaces. These indicators are adapted from established frameworks of digital citizenship education and civic literacy development (Rais et al., 2025; Soffi et al., 2025). Social character indicators include responsibility, tolerance, collaboration, empathy, and civic awareness, which reflect the behavioral dimensions expected from Generation Z learners in both digital and physical environments. The Society 5.0 construct reflects the integration of human-centered digital learning environments that support interactive and value-based education

The questionnaire uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. To ensure content validity, the instrument is reviewed by experts in civic education and educational technology. Revisions are made based on expert feedback to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with research objectives.

3. Sampling and Data Collection Stage

The next stage involves determining the research population and sampling strategy. The population consists of Generation Z students enrolled in secondary and tertiary educational institutions where Social Studies or civic education is taught. This group is selected because they represent individuals most exposed to digital environments and most relevant to the study of digital citizenship development.

A stratified random sampling technique is employed to ensure proportional representation across different educational levels, institutional types, and geographical contexts. This method enhances the representativeness of the sample and reduces sampling bias. The target sample size ranges from 200 to 400 respondents, which is considered adequate for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis.

Data collection is conducted using both online and offline survey distribution methods to ensure accessibility and inclusivity. Online questionnaires are distributed via digital platforms, reflecting the digital-native characteristics of Generation Z, while offline distribution is conducted in selected educational institutions to reach respondents with limited digital access. In addition to primary data, supporting information is gathered from curriculum documents and policy frameworks related to Social Studies education and digital literacy implementation (Soffi et al., 2025).

4. Data Processing and Validation Stage

After data collection, the dataset undergoes a systematic cleaning and coding process to ensure completeness and accuracy. Incomplete responses are excluded, and valid responses are coded for statistical analysis. The data is then processed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), which is suitable for analyzing complex relationships between latent variables and does not require strict normality assumptions.

Before hypothesis testing, the measurement model is evaluated through validity and reliability testing. Convergent validity is assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with a threshold of 0.50 indicating acceptable validity. Reliability is measured using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, both requiring a minimum value of 0.70. Discriminant validity is tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion to ensure that each construct is empirically distinct from others. These procedures ensure that the measurement model is statistically robust and suitable for structural analysis.

5. Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing Stage

Once the measurement model is validated, the structural model is analyzed to examine the relationships between variables. SEM-PLS is used to test both direct and indirect effects of digital citizenship-based Social Studies education on Generation Z social character formation. The analysis includes path coefficient estimation, significance testing using bootstrapping techniques, and evaluation of predictive relevance (R^2 values).

This stage allows the researcher to determine whether digital citizenship significantly influences social character formation and how strongly Society 5.0 educational environments contribute to this relationship. The use of SEM-PLS is consistent with previous studies on civic education transformation and digital literacy modeling in educational contexts.

6. Interpretation and Conclusion Stage

The final stage involves interpreting the statistical results in relation to the theoretical framework established during the literature review. Findings are analyzed to determine whether they support or contradict existing theories on digital citizenship, civic education, and Generation Z behavior. The interpretation also considers the implications of Society 5.0 as a contextual framework that shapes educational transformation.

At this stage, conclusions are drawn regarding the role of digital citizenship in Social Studies education and its contribution to shaping social character. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence supporting the integration of digital citizenship into civic education curricula.

7. Ethical Considerations Stage

Throughout all stages of the research, ethical principles are strictly observed. Participants are informed about the purpose of the study and provide voluntary consent prior to participation. Confidentiality is maintained by anonymizing respondent data, and all information is used solely for academic purposes. These ethical standards align with human-centered research principles emphasized in Society 5.0 frameworks, which prioritize dignity, responsibility, and ethical use of digital data in research contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Overview of the Study Findings

This study examined the influence of digital citizenship-based Social Studies education on the social character formation of Generation Z within the framework of Society 5.0. Using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), the analysis tested relationships between three primary constructs: (1) digital citizenship-based Social Studies education, (2) Society 5.0 learning environment, and (3) Generation Z social character.

The data were obtained from 356 valid respondents after screening incomplete responses. The respondents represented diverse educational levels and learning contexts, ensuring adequate variability for statistical analysis. The overall model demonstrated strong explanatory power, indicating that digital citizenship integration plays a significant role in shaping students' social character.

2. Measurement Model Evaluation

Before testing hypotheses, the measurement model was assessed for validity and reliability.

Table 1. Measurement Model Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Digital Citizenship-Based Learning	0.91	0.93	0.68
Society 5.0 Learning Environment	0.89	0.92	0.65
Social Character (Gen Z)	0.92	0.94	0.70

The results indicate that all constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 for reliability and 0.50 for convergent validity. This confirms that the indicators used in the study consistently measure their respective latent variables. Discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion also confirmed that each construct is empirically distinct, indicating no overlap between digital citizenship, Society 5.0 environment, and social character constructs.

3. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model evaluates the relationships between variables using bootstrapping (5,000 resamples). The results are summarized below.

Table 2. Structural Model Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	β (Beta)	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Digital Citizenship → Social Character	0.42	6.31	<0.001	Supported
H2	Society 5.0 Environment → Social Character	0.31	4.88	<0.001	Supported
H3	Digital Citizenship → Society 5.0 Environment	0.58	9.12	<0.001	Supported

3.1 Interpretation of Structural Results

The results demonstrate that digital citizenship-based Social Studies education has a strong positive effect on Generation Z social character (β = 0.42). This indicates that students who demonstrate higher levels of digital citizenship competencies—such as ethical online behavior, critical information evaluation, and responsible participation—tend to exhibit stronger social values including responsibility, tolerance, and collaboration.

This finding aligns with prior research emphasizing that civic literacy and digital ethics significantly influence youth behavior in digital environments (Rais et al., 2025; Soffi et al., 2025). It confirms that Social Studies education, when transformed through digital citizenship frameworks, can effectively shape students' character formation.

3.2 Influence of Society 5.0 Learning Environment

The Society 5.0 learning environment also shows a significant positive effect on social character (β = 0.31). This suggests that human-centered digital learning ecosystems—where technology supports interaction, reflection, and collaboration—contribute meaningfully to the development of students' civic values.

This finding supports the concept of Society 5.0, which emphasizes the integration of technology and human values to solve social problems (Ahmad et al., 2023; Nikiforova et al., 2022). In educational contexts, this environment enables students to engage more actively in collaborative learning and digital citizenship practices.

3.3 Relationship Between Digital Citizenship and Society 5.0 Environment

The strongest relationship identified in this study is between digital citizenship-based learning and the Society 5.0 environment (β = 0.58). This indicates that schools implementing strong digital citizenship education are more likely to create effective Society 5.0 learning environments.

This suggests a structural interdependence: digital citizenship is not only an outcome of education but also a driving force for creating adaptive, technology-integrated learning ecosystems.

4. Model Explanatory Power

Table 3. R-Square Results

Dependent Variable	R^2 Value	Interpretation
Social Character	0.63	Moderate–Strong
Society 5.0 Environment	0.34	Moderate

The model explains 63% of the variance in Generation Z social character, indicating a strong explanatory capacity. This suggests that digital citizenship and Society 5.0 learning environments are significant predictors of social character formation.

5. Predictive Relevance

The Q^2 predictive relevance test indicates that the model has strong predictive capability ($Q^2 > 0$). This confirms that the proposed framework is not only theoretically valid but also practically applicable in predicting social character outcomes.

6. Digital Citizenship as a Core Driver of Social Character

The findings confirm that digital citizenship is a central factor in shaping Generation Z's social character. Students who demonstrate strong competencies in ethical digital behavior and critical thinking are more likely to exhibit positive social values.

This supports previous studies that highlight the importance of integrating digital citizenship into civic education to strengthen ethical awareness and social responsibility. In the context of Social Studies education, this means that traditional content-based learning must evolve into value-based digital civic learning.

7. Transformation of Social Studies Education

The results indicate that Social Studies education is undergoing a significant transformation in the Society 5.0 era. Rather than focusing solely on memorization of civic concepts, education now emphasizes active engagement, digital participation, and ethical decision-making.

8. Generation Z and Digital Socialization

The study highlights that Generation Z's social character is heavily influenced by digital environments. Their exposure to online communication shapes how they understand responsibility, tolerance, and collaboration. However, without structured digital citizenship

education, these behaviors may become fragmented or inconsistent. This supports previous findings that Generation Z requires structured guidance to develop critical digital awareness and ethical behavior.

9. Society 5.0 as an Educational Context

The Society 5.0 framework plays a significant moderating role in this study. It creates a learning environment where technology supports human-centered values and social development. Society 5.0 is designed to harmonize technological advancement with human welfare. The findings of this study confirm that when education operates within such an environment, students are more likely to develop strong civic and social values.

10. Integrated Model of Educational Transformation

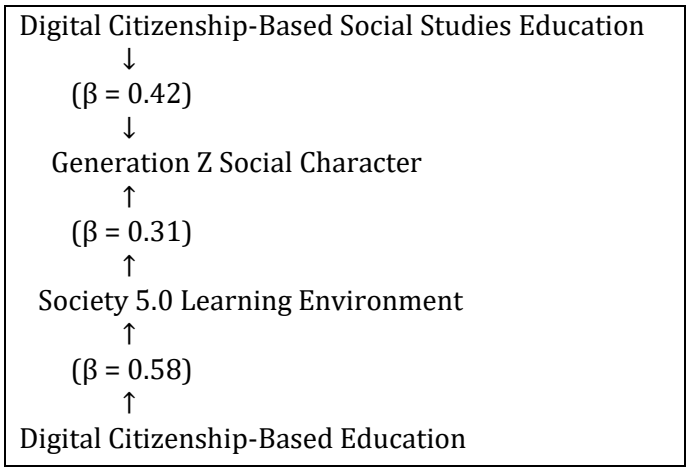

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Study (Descriptive)

This model illustrates a triangular relationship where digital citizenship acts as both:
- A direct predictor of social character
- A driver of Society 5.0 learning environments
- An indirect enhancer of civic behavior through educational transformation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that digital citizenship-based Social Studies education plays a significant role in shaping the social character of Generation Z within the context of Society 5.0. The findings demonstrate that the integration of digital citizenship principles—such as responsible online behavior, critical information literacy, ethical participation, and collaborative engagement—has a direct and meaningful influence on students' development of social values, including responsibility, tolerance, empathy, and civic awareness.

The analysis also shows that the Society 5.0 learning environment strengthens this relationship by providing a human-centered digital ecosystem that supports interactive, reflective, and value-oriented learning experiences. In such an environment, technology functions not only as a learning tool but also as a medium for fostering social interaction and civic engagement. This reinforces the importance of aligning educational practices with the evolving characteristics of digital society.

Furthermore, the study highlights that Generation Z's social character is highly responsive to educational approaches that integrate digital contexts. When Social Studies education is designed to incorporate digital citizenship frameworks, students are more likely to demonstrate positive social behavior both in digital and real-world environments. This indicates that character formation in the digital era cannot be separated from the quality of educational design and the learning ecosystem in which students participate.

Overall, the study emphasizes the need for a transformation in Social Studies education from traditional knowledge-based instruction toward a more dynamic, integrated, and digitally oriented approach. Such transformation is essential to prepare learners not only as knowledgeable citizens but also as responsible digital actors capable of contributing positively to society.

The findings of this research provide a strong foundation for rethinking educational strategies in response to rapid technological change. By embedding digital citizenship into Social Studies education and aligning it with the principles of Society 5.0, educational institutions can better support the formation of socially responsible, ethically aware, and adaptive Generation Z learners.

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