The Role of Digital Literacy in Countering Hoax News Among Generation Z: A Systematic Literature Review

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Keywords

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Abstract

Digital literacy is an essential skill in the modern era for understanding information and using digital media effectively. The purpose of this study is to determine the role of digital literacy in combating hoaxes among Generation Z. This study uses secondary data from national journals. Data collection techniques use the read-and-record method. Data validation techniques use triangulation. The results of the survey indicate that digital literacy in combating hoax news among Generation Z has three roles: 1) helping to improve digital literacy among Generation Z, 2) developing verification and information literacy skills, and 3) strengthening understanding of digital ethics and responsibility. This study concludes that there are three roles of digital literacy in combating hoax news among Generation Z.

Introduction

Generation Z is those born between 1995-2010, currently numbering around 68 million people (Kristyowati, 2021). Meanwhile, according to Christiani and Ikasari in Sa'adah, Rosma, and Aulia (2022), Generation Z is a generation born in the digital era with widespread internet access, reflecting technological sophistication across all levels of society. Generation Z, here, is defined as digital natives who grew up with technology, such as gadgets, and have been familiar with it since early childhood (Roberts et al., in Alfaruqy, 2022). Generation Z is an

igeneration that grew up with internet technology. Based on the definition above, Generation Z certainly has specific characteristics.

The characteristics of Generation Z include creativity and innovation in solving various problems (Taliwuna, 2024). Meanwhile, according to Arum, Zahrani, and Duha (2023), Gen Z shows greater independence than previous generations. One of the weaknesses of Gen Z is their communication skills, which tend to be weak and less well-honed (Adityara & Rakhman, 2019). Generation Z grew up in the digital era and has the following characteristics: digital native, creative, independent, and goal-oriented in facing these challenges.

The challenges faced by Generation Z include balancing lifestyle habits, sustainable fashion, and fomo (Rahmadania, Setiawan, & Putri, 2025). Meanwhile, according to Tamba (2024), Generation Z must adapt quickly to technological, creative, and innovative developments to remain competent in the world of work. Lack of empathy among Generation Z is a significant obstacle to effective communication (Juliyah et al., 2025). From all these challenges, Generation Z plays an important role in overcoming obstacles, without forgetting what Gen Z's role really is.

Gen Z plays an essential role in advancing education by integrating technology for interactive learning (Akbar, Hapipi, & Mustari, 2024). Meanwhile, according to Ulfa in Napriadi and Emiyati (2024), Generation Z is a driving force for change, as reflected in their daily activities and interactions on social platforms. Generation Z is a major driving force of social change due to their progressive spirit and idealism (Widyanto in Sulaksono et al., 2025). So, Generation Z plays an important role in technology integration, including on social platforms. Technology integration can be done through social platforms, which can support digital literacy.

Digital literacy is a person's ability to understand digital information through sequential reading on a computer (Bawden, in Hendaryan, Hidayat, & Herliani, 2022). Meanwhile, according to Ulfah in Tasliah, Nuraeni, and Rachman (2024), digital literacy is the ability to use digital technology to search for information and evaluate it critically, innovatively, and quickly. Literacy is a crucial skill that everyone must master to fully participate in the modern world (Fitriani et al., 2022). Therefore, digital literacy is a crucial ability in the modern era for understanding information and using digital media effectively, as stated in its goal.

Digital literacy aims to prepare Generation Z to face future challenges (Ramadhan in Wardani et al., 2023). Meanwhile, according to Aveny, Mahendra, and Saputra (2023), digital literacy also aims to empower communities to utilize digital technology optimally. The goal of digital literacy is to support learning and shape students into effective writers and readers (Safrudin & Sesmiarni, 2022). Therefore, digital literacy aims to increase knowledge in using technology effectively so that they can carry out their roles properly.

Digital literacy plays a role in eradicating fake news by helping people access more accurate information (Nugroho et al., 2024). Meanwhile, according to Tresnawati, Darmawan, and Surachman (2023), Digital literacy equips individuals by prioritizing information sources

that are clearly identifiable when searching for data. In the rapidly evolving digital era, digital literacy serves as a crucial shield to protect the public from hoax news (Arentania et al., 2025). Therefore, digital literacy equips individuals to use technology effectively, enabling them to actively participate in combating hoaxes among Generation Z.

A hoax is false information deliberately engineered to cover up the truth (Najicha & Raichanah, 2023). Meanwhile, according to Widodo et al. (2019), a hoax is false news or information deliberately spread to create a stir. A hoax is an attempt to spread false information designed to manipulate public opinion (Kartanegara et al., 2020). So, a hoax is news created to provoke someone into believing it is genuine, and later, social conflict arises from the types of hoaxes we know.

Hoaxes can arise from three factors: misinformation, intentionally spread false information; disinformation, intentionally spread false information; and malinformation, accurate information spread for malicious purposes (Hamzah & Basuki, 2022). According to Yulianita, Nurrahmawati, and Wiwitan (2017), hoaxes can take the form of fraud disguised as prizes, stories intended to gain sympathy, and, most often, urban legends. Hoaxes can be categorized into political, health, and social hoaxes (Maella et al., 2024). Therefore, based on the types of hoaxes, they have one common goal: to provide false information. Therefore, it is important to understand the types of hoaxes so that we can better protect ourselves from their impact.

The impact of fake news, or what is commonly called hoaxes, that spreads on social media can cause someone to become anxious and confused, and can trigger arguments in society (Butar, 2024). Meanwhile, according to Aminah and Sari in Parhan, Jenuri, and Islamy (2021), fake news, which can cause panic, misunderstanding, hatred, and slander, can become a significant problem if believed and spread. The widespread dissemination of hoaxes can lead to confusion in decision-making, difficulty distinguishing between true and false information, loss of trust, and vulnerability to provocation (Mailya in Pratama, Juwandi, & Bahrudin, 2022).

Based on the background outlined, this study identifies a significant research gap in the existing literature. While many studies acknowledge the importance of digital literacy for Generation Z and the serious threat of hoaxes, a paradox remains inadequately explained: Generation Z, known as digital natives and technically proficient, is highly vulnerable to hoaxes. This gap suggests that a general understanding of digital literacy—often limited to operational aspects—is insufficient to protect them. The focus of previous research tends to be general and fragmented, failing to address the holistic integration of critical competencies (such as information verification), ethical-social competencies (responsibility as content producers and disseminators), and creative competencies (the ability to generate alternative narratives) specifically within the unique psychological and behavioral contexts of Generation Z. Furthermore, existing studies have not systematically mapped the specific mechanisms by which each dimension of digital literacy works to counter hoaxes at each stage—from exposure, evaluation, to the decision to share. Therefore, this study is present to fill this gap through a Systematic Literature Review that aims to develop an integrated and contextual

conceptual framework that not only lists the roles, but also explains how digital literacy works (mechanisms) as a strategic weapon for Gen Z in combating hoaxes, by considering characteristics such as FOMO, social media consumption patterns, and their potential as agents of digital change. This research gap can be illustrated through the following image.
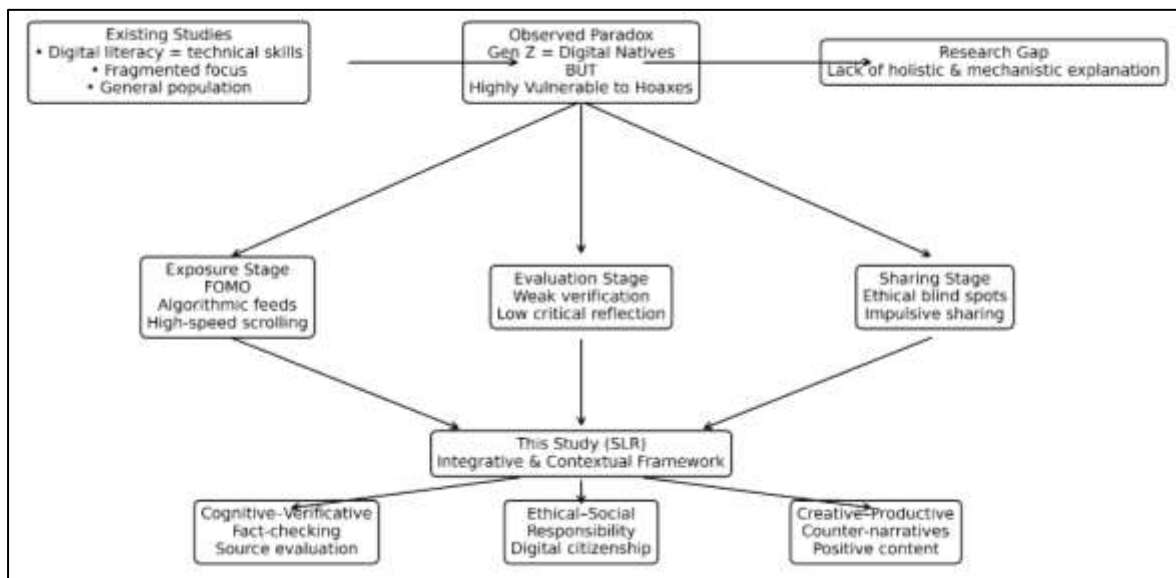

Figure 1. Research Gab

Based on the above background, it is essential to understand the role of digital literacy in combating the spread of hoax news among the public, Generation Z.

Method

Research design

This research is a *Systematic Literature Review*, often abbreviated as SLR. SLR research is a research method for collecting and assessing all types of research related to a selected topic in depth. (Triandini et al., in Hikmah and Hasanudin, 2024) .

Research Data

This research data has characteristics similar to secondary data. According to Umaroh and Hasanudin (2024), secondary data can be obtained through research from various National Journal articles, as well as bibliographic books, theses, and other documents related to the research topic. The secondary data utilized in this study are in the form of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences quoted from various sources, including books and published journal articles. In a way, national.

Data collection technique

The data collection technique uses the listening and note-taking method. The listening and note-taking method is a way of collecting data by listening to information and then making notes of the important points (Nisa, 2018). The listening method used in this study involved

listening to and understanding information. The recording method used in this study involved recording and collecting data points as needed. Information.

Data Validation Techniques

This data validation technique uses triangulation. According to Puspita and Hasanudin (2024), triangulation is a technique for strengthening research results and ensuring their validity by combining information from various sources. The triangulation currently used in this research relies on theoretical triangulation, in which theories from research or expert concepts are used to validate statements or conclusions. Existing concepts.

Results and Discussion

Results

Digital literacy in fighting hoaxes among Generation Z has several roles. These roles can be explained as follows.

1. Help understand digital literacy among Generation Z

Understanding Digital literacy among Generation Z needs to be comprehensively improved, because although they are *digital natives* who are adept at using technological devices, their abilities are often still limited to operational and consumer aspects, without being balanced with a critical understanding of ethical impacts, data security, and the ability to produce creative, active, and responsible content. Therefore, systematic efforts to integrate a digital literacy curriculum that includes aspects of cybersecurity, media ethics, critical thinking in responding to information, and the ability to utilize technology for productivity are significant. This aims to equip them to play a role beyond just being capable users, also to be digital citizens who are critical, creative, and ethical in their digital literacy.

2. Develop Ability Verification and Information Literacy

Digital literacy provides Generation Z with the skills to verify information, such as identifying credible news sources, checking facts through fact-checking websites, and analyzing potential bias or vested interests. With these skills, they are less likely to believe or spread information without first verifying its accuracy with reliable information.

3. Strengthening Understanding of Digital Ethics and Responsibility

Digital literacy teaches Generation Z that they are responsible for the content they share, including understanding the social and legal implications of spreading hoaxes. With this understanding, they can be more cautious in sharing information and choose not to spread content that is questionable or potentially disturbing to the public, considering the intended purpose. In ethics.

Discussion

Digital literacy is expected to provide a deep and broad understanding to Generation Z (Ramlan, 2015). Meanwhile, according to Banjarnahor and Sari (2023), digital literacy really helps Gen Z run and develop businesses, in a sense, as an effective blessing. Without good literacy, Generation Z is easily trapped in a hoax spread on social media (Imamah, Alfarisi, & Aini, 2024). So, with an understanding of their digital literacy, they can become competent and responsible users.

Literacy information equips someone with the ability to recognize the need for information, search for it, assess it, and use it to make the right decision (Hidayah, 2017). Meanwhile, according to Rahmawati (2021), literacy information not only involves questioning and using source information but also the ability to explore, utilize, and evaluate information effectively. With the ability to think critically, someone can better face news that is not based on reason and prevent the spread of misinformation (Rusdiyanti et al., 2023). So literacy information is important for searching, evaluating, and using information effectively.

The purpose of strengthening the individual in ethical, responsible, and caring education is to focus on moral and ethical development (Farid in Qowim et al, 2024). Meanwhile, according to Sugiarto and Farid (2023), literacy is important for students now and also helps them become responsible students in the future. With an all-digital public understanding of digital ethics, the dissemination of false information can be significantly reduced. Identifying and overcoming news lies will also increase (Musyidah et al., 2025). So, strengthening understanding of ethics and digital responsibility is important to build a positive, responsible digital ecosystem.

Based on the background and research results presented, the main novelty in this study lies in the integrative and contextual approach to understanding the role of digital literacy for Generation Z. This study does not merely repeat the common narrative that digital literacy is important for combating hoaxes, but specifically fills the gap between Generation Z's technical-operational abilities as digital natives and their critical, ethical, and creative competencies, which are often lacking. The novelty of this research is demonstrated through three unique contributions: First, this study integrates the three pillars of digital literacy—cognitive-verificative, ethical-legal, and productive-creative—into a single, mutually reinforcing framework, unlike previous studies that tended to discuss these aspects separately. Second, this study contextualizes the digital literacy framework with the unique psychosocial characteristics of Generation Z, such as their tendency toward FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), their instant communication patterns, and their role as agents of change on social media, thereby enabling more targeted recommendations. Third, this study shifts the paradigm from a defensive perspective (protecting Generation Z from hoaxes) to an empowering perspective (shaping them into critical and proactive digital citizens). As a Systematic Literature Review, the resulting synthesis not only summarizes the findings but also presents a coherent roadmap for developing educational policies, curricula, and digital platform designs that equip Generation Z to be not only skilled users but also responsible

content producers and effective hoax filters within their digital ecosystem. This novelty can be explained through the following image.
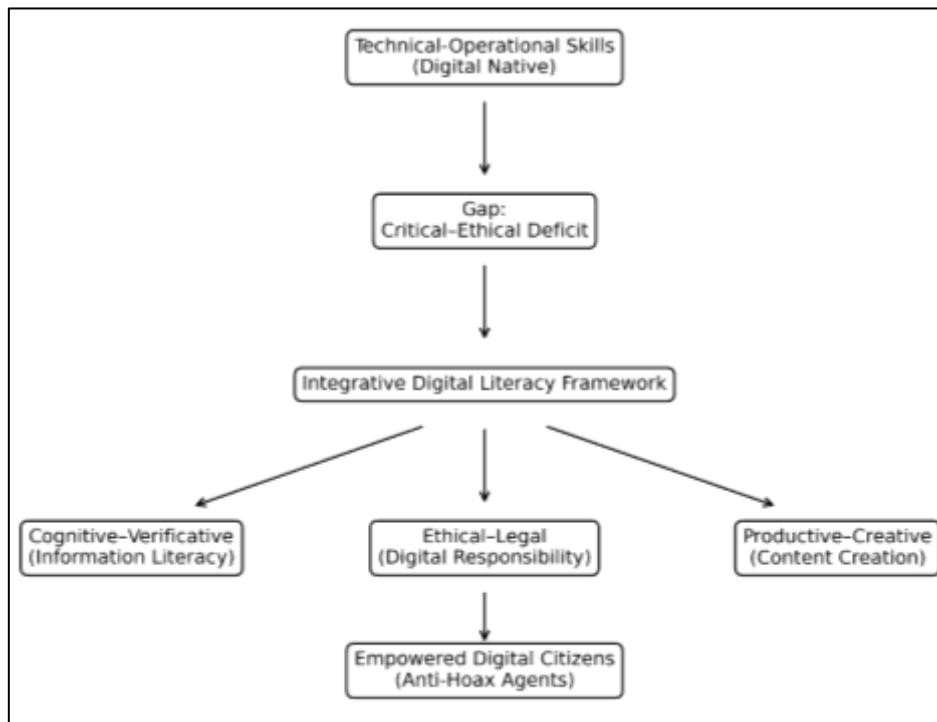

Figure 2. Conceptual Novelty of Digital Literacy Framework for Generation Z

Conclusion

Conclusion study. There are three roles of digital literacy in combating hoax news among Generation Z. These roles include 1) helping to understand digital literacy among Generation Z, 2) developing verification and information literacy skills, and 3) strengthening understanding of ethics and responsibility.

The findings of this study have important implications for education and digital literacy policies. First, formal education curricula need to integrate digital literacy holistically, from secondary school through university, with an emphasis on critical thinking, analysis of information sources, and digital ethics. Second, the government and related institutions need to develop digital literacy awareness and training programs that are accessible to all members of Generation Z, especially through the digital platforms they use daily. Third, collaboration between academics, social media platforms, and communities needs to be strengthened to create a healthy digital ecosystem that is responsive to misinformation.

Recommendations for further research should prioritize: (1) experimentally testing digital literacy models or interventions to reduce hoaxes among Generation Z; (2) conducting quantitative research with broader, more diverse samples to ensure findings are generalizable; (3) investigating psychological factors (digital self-confidence, motives for sharing) and social influences (family, peers, influencers) in the link between digital literacy and hoax

vulnerability; and (4) conducting longitudinal studies to track the development of Generation Z's digital literacy and its long-term impact.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Filynesia: responsible for conceptualization, investigation, and writing the script draft early. Hasanudin: supervising research, compiling methodology, conducting reviews, and editing the script, as well as validation. Saputri: handle formal analysis, data curation, and management source power. Suriyah: Contribute to visualization and administration projects. All writers have read and agree to the final published script.

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