

Campus Habituation and Digital Culture in Strengthening Communication Ethics

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how integrating digital culture values in campus habituation strengthens students' digital communication ethics as social capital. Using a qualitative descriptive method in Mataram City, data were collected from students, lecturers, staff, and campus leaders through interviews and observations. Findings reveal that students recognize the importance of digital values such as netiquette, digital literacy, and digital citizenship. However, the implementation of these values remains inconsistent and unstructured. Ethical awareness in digital communication varies among students, especially regarding personal social media use. Despite these challenges, digital platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram support the development of bonding and bridging social capital through trust-building and collaboration. The study suggests the need for structured campus policies, regular digital ethics training, curriculum integration, and digital communities to foster ethical digital behavior in academic settings.

Keywords:

Campus Habituation; Digital Culture; Communication Ethics.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji integrasi nilai budaya digital dalam habituasi kampus untuk memperkuat etika komunikasi digital mahasiswa sebagai modal sosial. Menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif di Kota Mataram, data dikumpulkan dari mahasiswa, dosen, tenaga kependidikan, dan pimpinan kampus melalui wawancara dan observasi. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa memahami pentingnya nilai digital seperti netiket, literasi digital, dan kewargaan digital. Namun, implementasinya belum konsisten dan belum terstruktur. Kesadaran etika komunikasi digital bervariasi, terutama dalam penggunaan media sosial pribadi. Meski demikian, platform digital seperti WhatsApp dan Instagram mendukung penguatan modal sosial bonding dan bridging melalui kepercayaan dan kolaborasi. Studi ini merekomendasikan kebijakan kampus yang terintegrasi, pelatihan rutin, integrasi kurikulum berbasis teknologi, serta pembentukan komunitas digital untuk membentuk perilaku digital yang etis di lingkungan akademik.

Kata kunci:

Habituasi Kampus; Digital Culture; Etika Komunikasi.

1. Introduction

The advancement of information and communication technology in the digital era has significantly transformed various aspects of human life, including higher education. Universities today are not only expected to produce academically competent graduates but also individuals who are ethically responsible and digitally literate. The integration of digital culture values such as netiquette, digital literacy, and digital citizenship has become essential in shaping student communication behaviors in both academic and social contexts (Kaun, 2021; J. Kennedy, 2018). Four pillars of literacy are important to introduce and provide an understanding of information and communication technology devices, namely digital skills, digital culture, digital ethics, and digital safety. Digital culture is a form of community activity in the digital space while still having national insights, Pancasila values, and diversity (Kominfo, 2021). Despite their importance, the actual practice of digital communication among students remains problematic. Incidents such as cyberbullying, misinformation, hate speech, and digital privacy violations are still prevalent (Jin, Yu, Ahmad, Shafique, & Ahmad, 2024; Sobande, Kanai, & Zeng, 2022). These challenges indicate a lack of structured integration of digital culture values in campus life and students' limited awareness of digital communication ethics.

The habituation of digital culture values on campus should be integral to the educational strategy to build student character. Several studies show that the integration of digital culture values through curriculum, training, and student orientation approaches can increase digital communication awareness and skills (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006). However, the implementation of this kind of policy is often carried out partially and unstructured, so it does not have a significant impact on student behavior (Robinson, 2008).

Habituation, defined as the consistent and structured reinforcement of values through daily practices, should serve as a key strategy in embedding digital culture across all facets of campus life. The formation of student character is ideally carried out through academic programs (Saddam, 2019), non-academic activities (Saddam, 2019), and habitual reinforcement by all campus stakeholders (Saddam, Setyowati, & Juhadi, 2016; Saddam, Zurohman, & Bahrudin, 2018). Research has also shown that conservation values and digital humanism, which emphasize ethical engagement and human dignity in digital transformation, can play a central role in shaping students' digital conduct (Setyowati, Saddam, & Handoyo, 2020; Nida-Rümelin & Staudacher, 2024). Digital culture, which includes values, norms, and behaviors that develop in the digital world, greatly impacts how students communicate as social capital.

Digital culture itself is a product of human creativity and interaction based on internet technologies, reflected in how individuals think, behave, and communicate in online environments (Kirillova, 2023; Miller, 2020). The digital values applied in Indonesian higher education are ideally rooted in Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, serving as ethical and cultural foundations for digital behavior. However, a persistent digital divide continues to hinder equal access and digital participation, especially for students in marginalized or remote areas (López & Cardama, 2020). This inequality threatens the development of digital-based social capital, which relies heavily on equitable digital interaction, trust, and collaboration. Although modern universities emphasize the importance of digital skills and digital communication ethics, a significant discrepancy persists between these values and students' daily practices. Numerous cases of cyberbullying, misinformation, and privacy violations underscore the weak integration of digital culture values into campus life (Chen, Li, Ling, & Zou, 2024; Fauzi, 2024; Jin et al., 2023; Kennedy, Bryson, Ellsworth, & Kapur, 2025). It is necessary to examine how consistently reinforcing digital values through syllabi, orientation programs, and campus culture can strengthen students' digital communication ethics and contribute to developing their social capital.

Gutiérrez-Aguilar et al. (2024) a structured digital citizenship education model markedly enhances students' ethical awareness. Dorji (2022) stated that interactive and experience-based learning approaches are effective in improving learning outcomes. Adha et al. (2024) highlight that transferring knowledge and values does not necessarily have to occur within a physical classroom, emphasizing the importance of flexibility in teaching methods in the digital era.

Johansson et al. (2022) highlighted the effectiveness of metacognitive tools in helping students respond ethically to misinformation and presented a comprehensive intervention framework to reduce their vulnerability. Hobbs (2017) supported the idea that habitual reinforcement of digital values via campus programs fosters consistently ethical behavior and revealed a positive correlation between media literacy and decreased susceptibility to hoaxes among students. Shank and Cotton (2014); Tett and Maclachlan (2007); Zhao et al (2021) reported that digital literacy boosts self-efficacy, raising students' social capital. Wicaksono and Prasetyo (2023) concluded that the maturity of Indonesian students' digital competence must be supported through a framework of habituation of digital values. (Bulger & Davison, 2018; Dame Adjin-Tettey, 2022; Park & Rim, 2019) demonstrated that media literacy education lowers belief in hoaxes. Kim (2018); Kim and Ball-Rokeach (2006) found that campus-based digital literacy initiatives increase social trust and student engagement. Boler et al. (2025); Lu et al. (2024) in Pakistan showed that tailored interventions effectively improved students'

ability to discern misinformation. García-Peñalvo (2021); Poncette et al. (2020); Setó-Pamies and Papaoikonomou (2016); Zhao, Zhao, and Shi (2023) the European context emphasized integrating moral values into campus digital modules.

Most studies emphasize module-based digital interventions or structured digital literacy programs, yet few have explored the comprehensive effects of campus habituation in shaping students' digital ethics and social capital. An integrative understanding is needed to examine how institutional policies, curricula, and everyday campus interactions collectively influence students' digital thinking and behavior. While existing studies emphasize the role of digital literacy and ethics in general education, few focus on the structured integration of digital culture values through campus habituation to strengthen ethical digital communication. Moreover, the link between digital culture, student communication ethics, and social capital formation remains underexplored. Most studies overlook how daily practices, institutional policy, and cultural value systems influence ethical behavior in digital spaces.

This study presents a novel approach by highlighting the importance of systematic habituation of digital culture in campus life to strengthen students' digital communication ethics and build social capital. It offers an integrative view that connects institutional responsibility, student behavior, and socio-digital interaction patterns in higher education. This study aims to examine how digital culture values are integrated into campus habituation practices, analyze their influence on the development of students' digital communication ethics, and explore how these ethics contribute to forming students' social capital within academic environments.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore and analyze digital culture values' integration into campus habituation and their role in strengthening students' digital communication ethics as social capital. A qualitative design was selected to allow an in-depth understanding of social phenomena in a natural context, particularly how daily campus practices shape digital behavior and ethical awareness (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This approach is suitable for capturing diverse perspectives and experiences related to digital culture habituation within academic environments.

2.2 Research Location

The research was conducted at three universities in Mataram City: Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram, Universitas Pendidikan Mandalika, and Universitas 45 Mataram. These campuses were selected purposively due to their diverse student populations and active digital technology use in academic and non-academic settings. Mataram was considered a representative urban area where digital transformation in higher education occurs rapidly.

2.3 Informants and Data Collection Techniques

The research involved 24 informants, including 12 students, four lecturers, four education staff, and four university leaders. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, considering their

engagement in digital communication practices and their roles in implementing campus habituation programs.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The interviews allowed for flexibility in exploring key themes while ensuring the consistency of core questions. Observations were conducted in academic forums, student orientation programs, and digital platform interactions. Supporting documents included campus regulations, digital communication guidelines, and training materials related to digital literacy and ethics. The data was collected over three months (June - August 2024), allowing sufficient time for field engagement, triangulation, and validation.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the interactive model by Miles & Huberman (2007); Saldaña (2021) which includes four main steps: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Transcripts from interviews and field notes were coded thematically using inductive and deductive coding strategies. Emerging themes were compared across different informant groups to ensure credibility and depth of analysis. Data triangulation from multiple sources was used to improve the validity and trustworthiness of findings.

3. Results and Discussion

This research was conducted in three private universities in Mataram City: the University of Muhammadiyah Mataram, the Mandalika University of Education, and the University of 45 Mataram. This study aims to describe and analyze the integration of digital culture values in campus habituation to strengthen students' digital communication ethics as social capital. The research results are formulated based on data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation.

Data were analyzed using a thematic approach through open, axial, and selective coding. This process generated three main themes: (1) student understanding of digital culture, (2) habituation of digital culture values on campus, and (3) student social capital through digital communication. Sub-themes and direct quotes from informants support each theme.

3.1 Student Understanding of Digital Culture

Most students understand digital culture as essential to academic and social life. Concepts such as netiquette, digital literacy, and digital citizenship are widely recognized, although the level of understanding varies. "In my opinion, digital culture is not just about using the internet, but also knowing how to behave ethically, like not spreading hoaxes or hate speech." (Student Informant 3).

While students demonstrate conceptual awareness, many experience difficulty applying digital culture values, especially on personal social media platforms. "In class, we know we should be polite, but in WhatsApp groups it often gets out of hand." (Student Informant 7). This variation in practice

reflects the uneven formation of students' digital habitus, which is strongly influenced by access to technology and the level of digital skill.

Most students understand that digital culture is important to academic and social life. Students recognize netiquette (ethics in digital communication), digital literacy, and digital citizenship. However, this understanding is uneven. Some students show deep understanding, while others only have basic knowledge (Denzin, 2017; Kaun, 2021; J. Kennedy, 2018). Students realize that the values of digital culture, such as maintaining privacy, not spreading false information, and communicating politely, contribute to a healthy communication environment. However, they also face difficulties applying these values, especially when using social media for personal purposes outside the academic context.

3.2 Habituation of Digital Culture Values on Campus

Digital culture values are introduced and reinforced through both academic (lectures) and non-academic activities (student orientation, training, and seminars). However, this process remains fragmented and lacks comprehensive institutional integration. “We usually mention digital ethics at the start of lectures, but there’s no formal system to evaluate whether students apply it.” (Lecturer Informant 2).

The habituation of digital culture values in the environment is carried out through all academic and non-academic activities. This habituation is carried out by lecturers in the lecture process, both at the beginning, middle, and end of the lecture. In addition, habituation is also carried out through non-academic activities, both at new student orientation, training, seminars, and workshops related to digital literacy. This is done to convey the code of ethics for digital communication in the academic environment. The practice of habituation of digital culture values in the campus environment can be illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Practices of Digital Culture Value Habituation in Campus Settings

No	Activity	Scope and Description
1	Student orientation	Introduction to digital tools and communication ethics for new students.
2	Digital literacy training	Organized sporadically by faculties, not yet embedded into the core curriculum.
3	Code of digital communication ethics	Implemented in formal academic settings, but not in informal student interactions.

Source: Field observation and document review (2024)

Campuses provide digital infrastructure such as Wi-Fi and LMS access; some have developed digital literacy modules. However, challenges remain, particularly in monitoring student behavior outside formal academic settings. “We cannot monitor how students behave on their personal social media accounts” (Campus Leader Informant 1). The observation results show that not all students participate in this training optimally, and there is no evaluation system to ensure the achievement of digital culture values.

Campuses play an important role in supporting the integration of digital culture values, including providing adequate technological infrastructure, such as internet networks and online learning platforms. Preparation of digital literacy training modules that include ethics, data security, and digital well-being. However, the challenge faced is the supervision of students' digital behavior outside the campus environment, which is often beyond the control of educational institutions (López & Cardama, 2020; Robinson, 2008).

3.3 *Student Social Capital through Digital Communication*

Digital communication plays a vital role in building students' social capital. It facilitates bonding within peer groups and bridging across departments and student organizations. “Our Telegram group isn't just for assignments, we also help each other find internships” (Student Informant 10). This study found that digital communication is significant in building student social capital. This is a commitment of universities to produce a generation ready to be in the world of work. So this can be seen from the bonding of social capital and the bridging of social capital that is built, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Forms of Student Social Capital through Digital Communication

No	Category	Description and Examples
1	Bonding Social Capital	Built through close-knit group discussions on WhatsApp and Telegram.
2	Bridging Social Capital	Formed through cross-department collaboration and networking on Instagram and LinkedIn.

Source: Interviews and observation of student digital interaction (2025)

However, the digital divide is a barrier to inclusive participation. Students with limited internet access are often left out of meaningful digital engagement. “I often miss out on information because the signal at home is bad and my data is limited” (Student Informant 12). However, there is a risk of a digital divide that hinders students with limited internet access from participating optimally in digital communication (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006).

3.4 *Theoretical Interpretation and Policy Recommendations*

The findings are interpreted using Pierre Bourdieu's Habitus and Arena Theory and Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Habitus and arena (Bourdieu), student digital behavior reflects the development of habitus, internalized dispositions shaped by social interaction (Jacevic, 2022; Ruiu, Ruiu, Ragnedda, & Addeo, 2024). However, this habitus is not uniform due to unequal access to digital capital. Campuses function as arenas where students, lecturers, and staff compete for social, cultural, and symbolic capital through digital activities. In social learning theory (Bandura), students learn through observation, imitation, and modeling. Lecturers and institutional practices serve as role models (Ahn, Hu, & Vega, 2020; Fithriani, Syabuddin, Gunawan, Zainuddin, & Sulaiman, 2021; Rumjaun & Narod, 2025). Campus initiatives such as digital literacy training influence student communication behavior. However, the lack of integrated reinforcement limits optimal internalization of these values.

“We learn from lecturers and seniors who manage campus social media accounts, so we know how to post appropriately” (Student Informant 8). Students with greater digital self-efficacy are likelier to demonstrate ethical digital communication, highlighting the importance of training that builds confidence and skill in digital environments.

The results of this study recommend that campuses adopt integrated policies to integrate the value of digital culture. This adoption is expected to be used to determine campus policies as a commitment to digital literacy, the pillar of digital culture. The recommendation is a commitment in the form of a recommendation, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Campus Policy Recommendations for Digital Culture Integration

No	Policy Area	Implementation Recommendation
1	Curriculum	Embed digital ethics and literacy into compulsory academic subjects.
2	Digital communication training	Conduct regular sessions on safe and ethical digital communication.
3	Infrastructure access	Expand equitable access to the internet and digital tools across campus.
4	Digital community building	Develop inclusive student digital communities to foster collaborative interaction.

Source: Thematic analysis of field data and institutional interviews (2025)

Digital literacy and digital communication ethics are important parts that must be integrated into all courses. In addition, routine trainings on ethical and safe digital communication are also carried out regularly. So, it needs to be supported by equal access to digital infrastructure. This is to develop a digital community that facilitates positive student interactions.

The results of this study are further analyzed using two main theoretical perspectives, namely Habitus and Arena Theory from Pierre Bourdieu and Social Learning Theory from Albert Bandura, to understand the phenomenon of integrating digital culture values in campus habituation and how this affects student digital communication ethics. Pierre Bourdieu's Habitus and Arena theory highlights how social agents (in this case, students, lecturers, and the campus) build practices based on existing social structures and owned capital (social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital).

Student habits are formed by student interaction in the digital environment, both inside and outside the campus. Understanding netiquette, digital literacy, and digital citizenship shows that students have internalized digital culture values as part of their habitus. However, this habitus is not completely uniform, because there are differences in the understanding and applying these values. Students with better access to technology and higher digital skills show stronger habits in ethical digital communication (Bourdieu, 1990).

The campus functions as an arena where various agents compete to accumulate social, cultural, and symbolic digital capital. The digital training program carried out by certain campuses reflects the uneven distribution of capital. Campuses with better digital policies and infrastructure tend to produce students with stronger digital habits, while other campuses struggle with limited digital social capital.

Bonding and bridging social capital built through digital communication reflect the results of competition in the digital arena. Students in the digital community can optimize social capital to strengthen networks, trust, and collaboration. However, the digital divide shows the inequality of social capital, which prevents certain students from participating optimally. Albert Bandura says social learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling. In the context of this research, integrating digital culture values on campus can be understood as the result of the social learning process that occurs at three levels: individual, group, and institutional.

Students learn about digital communication ethics by observing the lecturer's behavior, peers, and practices in the campus environment. For example, digital literacy training conducted by certain universities serves as a model that influences student behavior in communicating digitally. However, the lack of thoroughly integrated training reduces the opportunity for students to internalize these values optimally (Bandura, 1977).

The campus as an institution plays a role in reinforcing awards to students who demonstrate ethical digital communication practices, such as recognition in digital-based academic activities. On the other hand, the lack of supervision of student behavior outside the formal scope of the campus is a challenge in providing consistent reinforcement. Students with high confidence in using digital technology (self-efficacy) are likelier to show communication behavior to the values of digital culture. This shows the importance of training that improves students' skills and confidence in the digital world.

These two theories complement each other in explaining the phenomenon being studied. Habitus and Arena Theory provide a framework for understanding how social structure and capital affect digital culture practices on campus, while Social Learning Theory explains how students learn and internalize these values through the social learning process. In the context of habitus, students often exposed to positive modeling from lecturers and the campus environment tend to develop stronger digital habits. As a space for capital competition, the campus arena provides various stimuli that affect reinforcement in the student social learning process. Integrating digital culture values through integrated campus policies can strengthen students' digital habits while increasing the effectiveness of student social learning.

The theoretical and practical implications of the results of this study can be seen in the following. The theoretical implications of this study support Bourdieu's argument that social practices are not only influenced by habitus but also by the distribution of capital in a particular arena. In addition, this study strengthens the relevance of Bandura's social learning theory in digital culture. The practical implications of the results of this research are that campuses need to ensure that students' digital habits are strengthened through consistent policies and training programs, as well as paying attention to modeling and reinforcement aspects in the learning process.

The findings of this study show that integrating digital culture values in campus habituation can contribute significantly to the ethical formation of student digital communication and the development of social capital. Students demonstrate awareness of key values such as netiquette,

digital literacy, and digital citizenship; however, their application is still inconsistent, particularly outside academic settings. The role of campus institutions is crucial, yet often fragmented and unstructured, in embedding these values through curriculum, training, and digital communities.

This aligns with earlier research by Kaun (2021) and Kennedy (2018), who emphasized the importance of digital ethics in education, and echoes the arguments by Jin et al. (2024) and Sobande et al. (2022) regarding the prevalence of unethical digital behavior among students. However, this study differs by examining student knowledge and behavior and how daily campus habituation practices shape digital ethics as social capital, a connection that is underexplored in existing literature.

Furthermore, this research builds on Bourdieu's Habitus and Arena Theory by illustrating how students internalize digital culture through repeated exposure in a specific social context (the campus). At the same time, it expands Bandura's Social Learning Theory into the digital domain by showing how institutional modeling and reinforcement affect ethical digital conduct. Unlike previous studies that often treat digital ethics as isolated skill sets, this study highlights the importance of habitual, cross-functional integration involving all campus stakeholders. It demonstrates that structured habituation efforts from classroom practices to student organization activities can foster bonding and bridging social capital via digital platforms.

The novelty of this study lies in its dual contribution: (1) conceptually, it links digital communication ethics with social capital formation through the lens of campus habituation; (2) practically, it proposes an integrated framework for institutional policy that spans curriculum, infrastructure, and student community engagement. Thus, this research confirms previous findings and extends them by offering a more holistic, institutional, and sociological understanding of digital culture integration in higher education contexts.

The findings of this study offer new insights into integrating digital culture values through habitual campus practices, a topic that has received limited attention in prior research. While existing literature (Gutiérrez-Aguilar et al., 2024; Hobbs, 2017; Wicaksono & Prasetyo, 2023) emphasizes digital citizenship and literacy as formal educational goals, this study explores how daily, structured reinforcement (habituation) within campus life acts as a medium for internalizing those values. Unlike many previous studies that isolate digital ethics as part of modular instruction or extracurricular training (Bulger & Davison, 2018; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006), this research demonstrates that institution-wide habituation, embedded in orientation programs, academic routines, informal communication, and digital infrastructure, plays a significant role in shaping consistent ethical behavior.

Additionally, the study goes beyond individual-level outcomes by analyzing how habituation practices contribute to the formation of social capital, both bonding (close peer networks) and bridging (interdepartmental and cross-institutional collaboration) through platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and LinkedIn. This adds a sociological dimension to digital ethics research, as

it links communication behaviors to broader structures of trust, cooperation, and inclusion, which are essential for collective learning and digital citizenship.

The study also advances the theoretical framework by synthesizing Bourdieu's Habitus and Arena Theory and Bandura's Social Learning Theory, showing how structural (arena, capital distribution) and behavioral (modeling, reinforcement) mechanisms operate simultaneously in digital ethics formation. Practically, this research proposes that digital ethics education should not be limited to technical skills or legal compliance. It should include value-based habituation involving all campus stakeholders, lecturers, administrative leaders, student organizations, and IT departments. Structured habituation must be supported by campus policies that are inclusive, consistent, and measurable from syllabi integration to behavior reinforcement outside the classroom.

This study's novelty lies in two key contributions: conceptual innovation, which introduces a model of campus habituation as a central mechanism linking digital communication ethics and social capital formation, an angle rarely emphasized in current digital literacy or ethics discourse. The Practical Framework offers actionable recommendations for higher education institutions to move beyond sporadic digital training and toward institutionalized habituation embedded in campus routines, infrastructure, and community building initiatives.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that integrating digital culture values in campus habituation is critical in shaping students' digital communication ethics and building their social capital. While students are generally aware of key digital values such as netiquette, digital literacy, and citizenship, their application remains inconsistent due to unequal access to technology and the lack of systematic, campus-wide policies. Structured digital habituation through curriculum, role modeling, and reinforcement is essential to reduce behavioral gaps and enhance student participation in ethical digital environments. Academically, this research contributes to developing sociocultural approaches to digital ethics education by linking it to habitus, social learning, and social capital theory. For policy, it recommends integrating digital ethics into formal curricula, expanding inclusive infrastructure, and institutionalizing digital literacy training across academic and extracurricular settings. This study is limited to three private universities in Mataram and focuses on qualitative analysis without quantifying behavioral outcomes. Future research could involve multi-site comparative studies, mixed methods, and how gender, socioeconomic background, or academic discipline affects students' digital ethical development. Addressing the digital divide remains an urgent priority to ensure all students benefit equally from ethical and inclusive digital education.

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