Role of Digital Literacy in Shaping the Socialization of University Students

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Abstract

The objectives of the study were to explore the current landscape of digital literacy among university students; to identify the role of digital literacy on socialization dynamics within university students. This study collected quantitative data from 300 students through a questionnaire. The analysis found that majority of the respondents agreed that digital literacy assists students in developing social skills and etiquette, digital literacy positively impacts their social interaction manners, digital literacy has significant impact on communication skills, digital tools influence their social interactions. They had also agreed that digital literacy influences their perception of social norms, digital literacy facilitates and integrates different cultures, norms, and practices, access to digital technology can bridge up social interaction gaps among students, digital literacy can empower students to participate more actively in civic engagement, digital literacy promotes critical thinking among students. They had also agreed that digital literacy has made people more connected, digital literacy platforms influenced their values or attitudes toward social issues, digital literacy education emphasizes ethical considerations during socialization, empathy can be cultivated and practiced in online interactions, similar to face-to-face interactions, digital literacy tools can help to convey empathy and emotional nuances effectively. They had also agreed that digital literacy promotes understanding and respect among university students and digital literacy skills enhance students' adaptability in social settings.

Keywords: *Digital Literacy, Socialization, Students*

Introduction

Currently, socialization and digital literacy appear to be interlinked with each other. Socialization is the process of acquiring the ideas, values, practices, and mannerisms of a culture or a social group during life span of an individual (Lutfey & Mortimer, 2003). It prepares an individual to live in the society acceptably and peacefully. Socialization takes place through interaction of individuals with their peers, family members and media etc. and their participation in the society (Corsaro & Everitt, 2023). Digital literacy is referred to the ability to locate, assesses, creates and communicate information by using digital technologies (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014). It requires abilities like using digital tools, comprehending online safety and privacy, assessing the accuracy of digital information, and utilizing the technology for problem-solving and communication (Lupač, 2018). Digital literacy incorporates access and capacity to use and gain access to the internet and digital devices. It enables an individual to locate original source of data and to retrieve the data for use (Barnett, 2010).

It is necessary for an individual to learn different skills to live and work; and digital literacy is the one which seems necessary for all individuals and all need to be digitally literate. It enables an individual to use a technology safely and effectively for efficient working. It ranges from using the computers to the technological objects and emerging applications [for communication and work]. Amongst others, digital networking seems an obvious example of it. Digital media creates the culture of inter-connectedness (Tsourela & Nerantzaki, 2020).

Even so, Tsourela and Nerantzaki (2020) further that "internet has now become a way of life" which appeared to be used as a tool of "networking and communication". Hence learning the effective and safe use of internet and all its associated technologies and applications for efficient and smart working is referred to as "digital literacy" which due to its significance appears to be necessary for all individuals in a time of technological explosion. The more advancements in technology are made; the more need of digital literacy is needed. Hence, all need to be equipped with digital literacy even for networking and socialization which apparently is becoming a way of life.

Literature Review

In this backdrop, one can easily say that the Internet and its associated tools and applications appear to have promoted virtual interactions of the users -both synchronously as well as

asynchronously. Now one can interact with anyone at any time across the globe. Therefore, new patterns and ways of socialization have spurred to promote the ideas, values, practices, and mannerisms of a culture or a social group. Generally, it is observed that the young generation extensively uses internet and its applications like social media applications for communication, interaction and sharing of ideas and cultural values (Weisbuch & Ambady, 2009). Those having digital literacy seem to be confident in doing so.

However, internet addiction, nomophobia, digital divide, privacy and security of the personal data remain the main concerns in digital literacy and the use of technologies (Al-Hariri & Al-Hattami, 2017).

Research Objectives

The research objectives of the study were
(a) to explore the current landscape of digital literacy among university students; and
(b) to identify the role of digital literacy in socialization of university students.

Research Methodology

The current study the "Role of Digital Literacy in Shaping the Socialization of University Students" was of the descriptive nature. Its population comprised of students of Islamia University Bahawalpur (IUB), Pakistan. The sample size consisted of 300 Bachelor studies students of IUB. It was taken by using convenient sampling technique. Quantitative data was collected from the students of University. On the basis of relevant literature view, a self-constructed questionnaire was designed. Questionnaire was divided into two parts: part-1 contained "demographic information" about the gender, locality; and the part-2 comprised of 20 statements prepared according to 5 Point Likert scale.

These statements were specified to explore the role of digital literacy in shaping the socialization of university students. A pilot test was conducted to finalize the tool. A total 350 copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the researchers personally among the respondents after briefing on the objectives of the study. However, in spite of all efforts amongst the returned questionnaires 300 were found complete in all respects.

Analysis of the Collected Data

Table-1
Demographic Analysis of Students

Demographic Variables	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Gender		
Male	192	64.0
Female	108	36.0
Faculty		
Arts and Languages	31	10.3
Education	62	20.7
Social Sciences	104	34.7
Computing	36	12.0
Chemical & Biological Sciences	19	6.3
Veterinary & Animal Sciences	6	2.0
Medicine & Allied Health Sciences	5	1.7
Management Sciences & Commerce	15	5.0
Islamic Learning	1	.3
Faculty of Agriculture & Environment	8	2.7
Faculty of Physical & Mathematical Sciences	13	4.3
Program		
BS	238	79.3
M.Phil.	46	15.3
Ph.D.	16	5.3

Table-1 states that 64% of respondents are male and 36% are female. 10.3% of respondents belong to Arts and Languages faculty, 20.7% of respondents belong to Education faculty,34.7% of respondents belong to Social Sciences faculty,12.0% of respondents belong to Computing faculty, 6.3% of respondents belong to Chemical & Biological Sciences faculty, 2.0% of respondents belong to Veterinary & Animal Sciences,1.7% of respondents belong to Medicine & Allied Health Sciences,5.0% of respondents belong to Management Sciences & Commerce,.3% of respondents belong to Islamic Learning,2.7% of respondents belong to Faculty of Agriculture & Environment,4.3% of respondents belong to Faculty of Physical & Mathematical Sciences. 79.3% of respondents have BS qualification, 15.3% have M.Phil., while 5.3% have done a Ph.D.

Table-2
Opinions of students about Mannerism, Etiquette and Norms (N=300)

Statement	*SA f(%)*	*A f(%)*	*UNC f(%)*	*DA f(%)*	*SDA f(%)*	*Mean Score*
Digital literacy assists me in developing social skills and etiquette	122 (40.7%)	157 (52.3%)	10 (3.3%)	8 (2.7%)	3 (1.0%)	4.29
Digital literacy positively impacts my social interaction manners	116 (38.7%)	143 (47.7%)	23 (7.7%)	12 (4.0%)	6 (2.0%)	4.17
Digital Literacy influences my perception of social norms.	94 (31.3%)	129 (43.0%)	54 (18.0%)	18 (6.0%)	5 (1.7%)	3.96
Digital Literacy Facilitates and Integrates different cultures, norms and practices	114 (38.0%)	143 (47.7%)	32 (10.7%)	8 (2.7%)	3 (1.0%)	4.19

Table-2 highlights analysis of the statement, "mannerism, etiquette and norms". The analysis shows that 40.7% of respondents strongly agreed, 52.3% agreed. The mean score is 4.29 which affirms the response that digital literacy assists students in developing social skills and etiquette. Similarly, 38.7% of respondents marked *SA*, and 47.7% marked *A*; mean score was 4.17 which confirms that digital literacy positively impacts my social interaction manners. The analysis shows that 31.3% of respondents strongly agreed, 43% agreed. The Mean score was 3.96 and it supports the statement that digital literacy influences perception of students about the social norms of the society. Similarly, 38% of respondents marked *SA*, and 47.7% marked *A*. The mean score 4.19 supports the statement that digital literacy facilitates and integrates different cultures, norms, and practices.

Table-3
Opinions of students about Communication, Believes and Empathy (N=300)

Statement	*SA f(%)*	*A f(%)*	*UNC f(%)*	*DA f(%)*	*SDA f(%)*	*Mean Score*
Digital literacy has significant impact on communication skills	149 (49.7%)	105 (35.0%)	34 (11.3%)	8 (2.7%)	4 (1.3%)	4.29
Digital tools influence my social interactions	101 (33.7%)	141 (47.0%)	35 (11.7%)	17 (5.7%)	6 (2.0%)	4.05
Access to digital technology can bridge up social interaction gaps among students	129 (43.0%)	117 (39.0%)	30 (10%)	15 (5.0%)	9 (3.0%)	4.14
Digital literacy can empower students to participate more actively in civic engagement	104 (34.7%)	137 (45.7%)	40 (13.3%)	10 (3.3%)	9 (3.0%)	4.06
Digital literacy promotes critical thinking among students	144 (48.0%)	106 (35.3%)	33 (11.0%)	12 (4.0%)	5 (1.7%)	4.24
Empathy can be cultivated and practiced in online interactions, similar to face- to-face interactions	97 (32.3%)	116 (38.7%)	48 (16.0%)	28 (9.3%)	11 (3.7%)	3.87
Digital literacy tools can help me to convey empathy and emotional nuances effectively	80 (26.7%)	117 (39.0%)	65 (21.7%)	29 (9.7%)	9 (3.0%)	3.77

Table-3 highlights analysis of the statement "Communication, believes and empathy". The analysis shows that 49.7% of respondents marked *SA*, 35% marked *A* which stated digital literacy has significant impact on communication skills. The Mean score 4.29 also supports the statement. Similarly, 33.7% of respondents marked *SA*, and 47% marked *A* which stated digital tools influence my social interactions. The mean score 4.05 of the statement affirms it. Likewise, 43% of respondents marked *SA*, 39% marked *A* with a mean score 4.14 that access to digital technology can bridge up social interaction gaps among students. Even so, 34.7% of respondents marked *SA*, and 45.7% marked *A* which stated digital literacy can empower students to participate more actively in civic engagement. The mean score 4.06 also supports the statement. The analysis shows that 48% of the respondents marked *SA*, 35.3% marked *A* which stated digital literacy promotes critical thinking among students. The mean score 4.24 supports the statement that the digital literacy promotes critical thinking among students. Similarly, 32.3% of respondents marked *SA*, and 38.7% marked *A* with mean score 3.87 of the statement that empathy can be cultivated and practiced in online interactions, similar to the face-to-face interactions. However, the analysis shows that 26.7% of respondents marked *SA*, 39% marked *A* which stated digital literacy tools can help me to convey empathy and emotional nuances effectively. The mean score 3.77 supported the statement that digital literacy tools can help students to convey empathy and emotional nuances effectively.

Table-4
Opinions of students about Values, Respect, and Adaptability (N=300)

Statement	*SA* f(%)	*A* f(%)	*UNC* f(%)	*DA* f(%)	*SDA* f(%)	*Mean Score*
Digital literacy has made people more connected	156 (52.0%)	103 (34.3%)	23 (7.7%)	11 (3.7%)	7 (2.3%)	4.30
Digital literacy has made people more isolated	88 (29.3%)	107 (35.7%)	57 (19.0%)	37 (12.3%)	11 (3.7%)	3.75
Digital literacy platforms influenced my values or attitudes towards social issues	105 (35.0%)	127 (42.3%)	39 (13.0%)	19 (6.3%)	10 (3.3%)	3.99
Digital literacy education emphasizes ethical considerations during socialization	79 (26.3%)	161 (53.7%)	36 (12.0%)	14 (4.7%)	10 (3.3%)	3.95
Digital literacy promotes understanding and respect among university students	118 (39.3%)	104 (34.7%)	51 (17.0%)	16 (5.3%)	11 (3.7%)	4.01
Digital literacy platforms help me to adopt the latest social patterns	124 (41.3%)	126 (42.0%)	29 (9.7%)	16 (5.3%)	5 (1.7%)	4.16

Digital literacy and socialization are critical competencies within the modern world	100 (33.3%)	141 (47.0%)	48 (16.0%)	5 (1.7%)	6 (2.0%)	4.08
Digital literacy skills enhance students' adaptability in social settings	106 (35.3%)	127 (42.3%)	43 (14.3%)	11 (3.7%)	13 (4.3%)	4.01

Table-4 shows the analysis of the statement, "Values, respect and adaptability". The analysis shows that 52% of the respondents marked *SA*, 34.3% marked *A* which stated digital literacy has made people more connected. The mean score 4.30 supported the statement that digital literacy has made people more connected. Similarly, 29.3% of respondents marked *SA*, and 35.7% marked *A* with a mean score 3.75 of the statement that digital literacy has made students more isolated. Likewise, 35% of respondents marked *SA*, 42.3% marked *A* which stated digital literacy platforms influenced values or attitudes toward social issues.

The mean score 3.99 supports the statement. Similarly, 26.3% of the respondents marked *SA*, and 53.7% marked *A* with a mean score 3.95 of the statement that digital literacy emphasizes and promotes ethical considerations and socialization. Furthermore, 39.3% of the respondents marked *SA*, 34.7% marked *A* which stated digital literacy promotes understanding and respect among university students. Thee mean score 4.01 affirms the statement. Similarly, 41.3% of the respondents marked *SA*, and 42% marked *A* with a mean score 4.16 of the statement that digital literacy platforms help students to adopt the latest social patterns. Even so, 33.3% of the respondents marked *SA*, 47% marked *A* which stated digital literacy and socialization are critical competencies within the modern world. The mean score 4.08 also supports the statement. Similarly, 35.3% of respondents marked *SA* and 42.3% marked *A* with a mean score 4.01 of the statement that digital literacy skills enhance students' adaptability in social settings.

In response to the open-ended questions, an overwhelming majority of respondents were of the view that the university provides awareness regarding the positive impact of digital literacy on socialization of the university students' through seminars and workshops. Similarly, less that half of the respondents suggested offering of the digital literacy courses or modules focused on digital skills; incorporating digital socialization initiatives into the curriculum along with a feedback mechanism to gather input from students on their digital literacy needs and preferences.

Discussion and Conclusion

Results and Discussions

After collecting and analyzing the data it has been found that the majority of the respondents have the positive perceptions about the digital literacy in developing social skills and etiquette; and it aligns with the findings of the study of Lutfey and Mortimer, 2003. Majority of the respondents have the view that the digital literacy has significant impact on communication skills. Digital tools influence their social interactions which corresponds to the findings of the study of Mewangi et al., 2020. Majority of the respondents have the view that digital literacy influences their perception of social norms. It corresponds to the finding that digital literacy facilitates and integrates different cultures, norms and practices (Anton & Trisoni, 2022).

The majority of the respondents have the view that access to digital technology can bridge social interaction gaps among students. It aligns with the findings that *"Digital literacy can empower students to participate more actively in civic engagement. Digital literacy promotes critical thinking among students"* (Levine, 2011). Majority of the respondents have the view that digital literacy has made people [students] more connected. Digital literacy platforms influenced their values or attitudes toward social issues. Digital literacy emphasizes ethical considerations during socialization. Similar findings were affirmed by the Dewi et al., 2021. The findings of this study that majority of the respondents have the view that empathy can be cultivated and practiced in online interactions, similar to face-to-face interactions; corresponds to finding, *"Digital literacy tools can help to convey empathy and emotional nuances effectively"* of the study of the Kross et al., 2013. Majority of the respondents have the view that digital literacy promotes understanding and respect among university students. Similarly, the finding of the study that digital literacy and socialization are critical competencies within the modern world; correspond to that of the Ferrari (2012) digital literacy skills enhance students' adaptability in social settings.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, the researchers conclude that digital literacy assists students in developing social skills and etiquette. Digital literacy positively impacts their social interaction manners. Digital literacy has significant impact on communication skills. Digital tools influence their social interactions. The researcher concludes that digital literacy influences their perception of social norms. Digital literacy facilitates and integrates different cultures, norms, and practices.

Access to digital technology can bridge up social interaction gaps among students. Digital literacy can empower students to participate more actively in civic engagement. Digital literacy promotes critical thinking among students. Digital literacy has made people more connected. Digital literacy platforms influenced their values or attitudes toward social issues. Digital literacy education emphasizes ethical considerations during socialization. Empathy can be cultivated and practiced in online interactions, similar to face-to-face interactions. Digital literacy tools can help to convey empathy and emotional nuances effectively. Digital literacy promotes understanding and respect among university students. Digital literacy platforms help to adopt the latest social patterns. Digital literacy and socialization are critical competencies within the modern world. Digital literacy skills enhance students' adaptability in social settings.

However, offering of the digital literacy courses or modules focused on digital skills; incorporating digital socialization initiatives into the curriculum along with a feedback mechanism to gather input from students on their digital literacy needs and preferences is recommended for the university.

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