

Article

Digital Literacy Through Digital Citizenship: Online Civic Participation and Public Opinion Evaluation of Youth Minorities in Southeast Asia

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Abstract

The field of critical digital literacy studies has burgeoned in recent years as a result of the increased cultural consumption of digital media as well as the turn to the production of digital media forms. This article extends extant digital literacy studies by focusing on its subfield of digital citizenship. Proposing that digital citizenship is not another dimension or axis of citizenship, but a practice through which civic activities in the various dimensions of citizenship are conducted, this article critically considers how the concept of digital citizenship can furnish further insight into the quality of online civic participation that results in claims to and acts of citizenship. Through interdisciplinary scholarship, drawing from critical media and cultural theory, and media psychology, and deriving new empirical data from qualitative digital ethnography and quantitative focus group and survey studies, it presents original case studies with young people in Southeast Asia, including young Muslim women's groups in Indonesia and youth public opinion on LGBTs in Singapore. It argues that Southeast Asian youth digital citizenship foregrounds civic participation as emergent acts that not only serve to make society a better place, but also enacts alternative publics that characterise new modes of civic-making in more conservative, collectivistic Southeast Asian societies.

Keywords

digital citizenship; digital literacy; Indonesia; online civic participation; Singapore; Southeast Asia

Issue

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1. Introduction

This article extends digital literacy through its critical subfield of digital citizenship. Digital literacy studies have burgeoned in recent years consequent of the increased cultural consumption of digital media and the turn to the production of digital media forms. The term can refer in general to individual knowledge about an activity mediated by digital media, as well as in particular to mastery in operation and proficiency in negotiating the affordances of digital platforms. This article extends current scholarship which addresses these competencies in terms of information and skills, to consider how the con-

cept of digital citizenship can furnish new insights into the quality of online civic participation that results in claims to and acts of citizenship.

Digital citizenship is broadly defined as the ability to participate online and as an extension of social inclusion. It is not another dimension or axis of citizenship, but a practice through which civic activities in the various dimensions of citizenship are conducted. It thus refers to the capacity and use of ICTs to plan, organize or conduct activities in the citizenship domains of the social, political, economic and cultural. The Internet may be a space for civic activities and engagement or may simply be a planning tool to enable these activities to oc-

cur. In this article, we theorise digital citizenship as a sub-field of digital literacy, and demonstrate this focus by extending the emphasis on online competencies to civic participation. We examine original case studies drawing from empirical fieldwork with young people's use of social networking platforms in Southeast Asia, including the collective organizing of young Muslim women's groups in Indonesia and youth evaluation of public opinion on LGBTs in Singapore. We highlight the formation of civic skills such as how young people recognize, filter and use online information to make decisions about public discourses of homosexuality; how they appropriate gendered forms of public expressions, and; how they support new modes of affiliation with peer networks to create alternate publics and entrepreneurship. We present interdisciplinary scholarship drawing from critical media and cultural theory as well as media psychology, to derive new empirical data from qualitative digital ethnography and focus group studies. This article argues that for young people, ways of engagement in civic life are impacted by, and to some extent, reliant on the Internet and social media. Southeast Asian youth digital citizenship foregrounds civic participation as emergent acts that not only serve to make society a better place, but also enacts alternative publics that characterize new modes of civic-making in more conservative, collectivistic Southeast Asian societies.

2. From Digital Literacy to Digital Citizenship of Youths

The term 'digital literacy' describes the skills and capabilities that are required by individuals to participate in a digitally-enabled society. Gilster (1997) first coined the concept to refer to "the ability to both understand and use digitised information" (p. 2). Central here is Gilster's emphasis on the mastery of ideas rather than technical skills. The former highlights its conceptual definition while the latter draws on its standardized operational definition (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). Gilster's emphasis on the former draws attention to how digital literacy requires not just socio-cognitive competencies to evaluate, analyze and synthesize information, but that such information can enable individuals to mediate action and engage in the world. It draws attention to literacy not simply as the ability to read and write, but the capacity to understand and shape how information is consumed and presented. This emphasis prompts Lankshear and Knobel (2008) to suggest digital literacy as a *social practice* concerned with making meanings out of texts that are produced, received, distributed, and exchanged via the digital. For them, a social practice is not simply concerned with the way people read texts, but the ways people talk about, use, and encode beliefs and values about them, as well as the ways these texts socially connect them to others in different contexts. The framework of 'digital literacies' is thus more cogent to refer to the multiple ways in which people use and interpret the digital text, as well as the multitude of digital media forms that are constantly evolving.

The expansive view of digital literacies attends to the diverse practices that surround the digital society and their attendant policy implications, as well as their benefits to educational learning. More recently, Luke (2017) draws this field together by encapsulating the debates on digital literacies under the framework of critical literacy. Critical literacy is not just about learning how to critique the government or corporations but knowing "how texts attempt to do things to people and places, how they can be contested and, ultimately, remade in constructive ways that work in the interests of [sic] people and their communities" (2017, p. 11). The author highlights how affordances of digital tools such as multimodality, interactivity, collaboration, intertextuality, and identity construction are significant to fostering critical inquiry. This development resonates with research on the digital divide that has also shifted the focus on material and skills access (i.e., technical competencies) toward mental and usage access (i.e., critical and cultural literacies) (e.g. D'Haenens, Koeman, & Saeys, 2007; van Dijk, 2004).

These scholarly developments suggest that digital literacy is a social practice as well as a form of critical literacy. They also share two common features. First, they eschew the focus on learning for technical skills by treating technology and literacy as social practices enshrined in critical inquiry. This emphasis enculturates competencies that allow people to interrogate the relationship between language, technology, and power, and engage in social action and justice. Second, they focus predominantly on literacy education in schools and the competencies of children and young people. This stems from the theoretical influence in new literacy studies and genealogy in educational pedagogy, in particular on the centrality of technology to the lives of digital natives and the capacity of schools to prepare them with resources and skills for meaningful participation.

The current article draws on and extends the above-mentioned approaches to social practice and critical literacy in two ways. First, by advancing extant digital literacy studies with the subfield of digital citizenship and, second, by expanding the scope of the school to that of the social world inhabited by these people. The purpose is to critically examine how digital literacy enables young people to participate as civic actors and, in and through these practices, allow them to make claims to citizenship. Citizenship has become a significant site in the current milieu of global mobility, technological disruption and youth precarity. Especially in Southeast Asia where our case studies are located, a region where conservative states and smart city intelligent systems have co-evolved in tandem, digital citizenship is a key arena to identify the capacity of digital multiliteracies to empower young people's rights to participate effectively and belong. This alignment of digital literacy to citizenship is already reflected in current European policy recommendations that call for digital citizenship to be embedded in the school curriculum so young people are not just provided opportunities to design, create, make,

remix and share digital creative content, but also learn the broader issues associated with the ownership of data, privacy, and movement across different media platforms and social networks (McGillivray, McPherson, Jones, & McCandlish, 2016).

Digital citizenship is a relatively new and contested concept. Its meanings and applications vary significantly. The term is situated at the nexus of the pervasiveness of digital technologies in a modern world with the promise of new modes of participation and the threats and risks associated with digital media. There are two contrasting normative approaches to digital citizenship, especially in relation to young people: the *freedom* approach and the *control* approach. The following section critically discusses these approaches and forwards a more productive third approach centered on civic participation.

In the freedom approach, digital citizenship is broadly defined as “the ability to participate online” (Mossberger, Tolbert, & McNeal, 2008, p. 1). This approach draws together issues surrounding access and social inclusion, namely digital participation and inclusion. Here, the view is that online technologies have fundamentally reshaped the meaning and function of citizenship. Where normative understanding of citizenship is distinguished by traditional or analogue citizenship, where communication tended to be linear and one-way (politicians and authorities talk to the public and public either responds or remains silent), digital citizenship assumes multi-layered, open-ended political interactions where individuals find ways to “recognize, contest and negotiate with the powers that exist to control them” (Coleman, 2006, p. 259). Akin to the concept of the netizen as a political subject constituted in cyberspace, this approach carries a transformative potential because of the simultaneous devotion to the nation, to the Internet, and to the cosmopolitan political spaces that cyberspace inaugurates (Poster, 2002).

This approach resonates strongly with young people. Studies show that young people find fewer opportunities and less satisfaction in traditional, formal forms of civic engagement, and that many youths are resorting to finding new ways of practicing citizenship online (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2010; Rahim, Pawanteh, & Salman, 2011; Ward, 2013). The contemporary young person is already characterized as a ‘networked young citizen,’ one who is likely to practice citizenship in digital spaces (Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014). They are more likely to avoid more traditional forms of political or civic organizations in favor of participating in horizontal, non-hierarchical networks, to be project-oriented, reflexive and to engage in lifestyle politics. In other words, young people are practicing citizenship online without conforming to the dutiful model of citizenship and mostly through social media platforms.

The second approach to digital citizenship is the control approach. Here, the young person is constructed as a not-yet-adult within the mainstream society, in need of protection and guidance, and their digital practices of cit-

izenship portrayed as not-yet-citizenship (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011; Jones & Mitchell, 2016; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). This framing of young people provides adults with justification for managing youth digital citizenship, evident in current national projects around digital media literacy, such as the Australian Government’s (2018) *Digital Citizenship Guide* or the Government of Canada’s (2018) *Digital Citizenship Policy Development Guide*. Adults are granted agency to frame what is considered a good digital citizenship and young people are framed as apprentice citizens who need to learn codes of communication. Discussions focus on normative ideas about dutiful citizenship—what should digital citizenship be like, how should digital citizen behave, the necessary discussions around appropriate use of technology, the risks associated with digital media (especially when users are children and young people), and issues of privacy, safety and media literacy (Ribble, 2011). Digital citizenship is thus defined through the norms of appropriate online behaviors, and digital citizenship education is seen as a means to prepare young people into responsible adulthood and civic engagement (McGillivray, McPherson, Jones, & McCandlish, 2016). The emphasis here is on educating digital natives to be a ‘good citizen’ by teaching them the appropriate codes of good behaviour in the same way that they are taught how to ‘behave properly’ in social settings.

This approach has been criticized as unbeneficial to the young people it aims to protect because it stresses the greater need to protect them from online risks over their right to participate and be heard. As noted earlier, arguably, their exclusion from formal participation in the public sphere has led them to engage in political discussions and learn about political and social issues in informal and familiar spaces availed to them by the Internet and social media.

This article proposes a third approach that moves beyond the oppositional freedom and control approaches to focus on civic participation. Here, digital citizens are “those who technology frequently, who use technology for for political information to fulfil their civic duty, and at work for economic gain” (Mossberger et al., 2008, p. 2). This understanding of digital citizenship is closely aligned with Bennett et al.’s (2011) understanding of ‘actualizing citizenship’ that distinguishes between dutiful citizenship (a traditional model of citizenship organized around rights and responsibilities), and ‘actualizing citizenship’ as a mode of civic engagement characterized by personal engagement with peer networks that source information and organize civic action using social technologies that maximize individual expression (p. 834). While online environments function as sites for learning and practicing various forms of citizenship, ‘actualizing citizenship’ flourishes in digital networked environments through participatory media that blurs the line between producers and consumers, non-hierarchical and multi-directional sources of creative civic inputs, and user generated content that allows for self-expression and individ-

ualization. As the capacity to practice political and economic citizenship online relies on daily access to digital technologies as well as educational and technological skills, digital citizenship is inseparable from the capacity for wider participation in a society. Here digital citizenship captures not only how people practice citizenship online, but also how these practices interrelate with their offline lives (Bakardjieva, Svensson, & Skoric, 2012; Choi, 2016; Coleman, 2006; Couldry et al., 2014).

This approach considers digital citizenship as a complex assemblage of technical, social, political, legal, and commercial processes that cultivate fragmented, multiple and agonistic digital spaces and digital citizens (McCosker, Vivienne, & Johns, 2016). Here, digital citizenship is defined by “the acts of citizenship” rather than by online participation where the “digital citizen is both a result and an effect of making claims about rights” regardless whether these rights exist or not yet (Isin & Ruppert, 2015, p. 62). This approach challenges dualisms that distinguishes between digital and real worlds, and rights and responsibilities when thinking about citizenship. In this way, the lines between private and public, online and offline, local and global, become blurred while citizenship becomes inseparable from other everyday practices. Digital citizenship is not seen as another dimension or axis of citizenship, but a practice through which civic activities in the various dimensions of citizenship are conducted.

In this article, we demonstrate the third approach to digital citizenship as a subfield of digital literacy focussing on the online practices and acts of citizenship by young people in Southeast Asia, specifically in Singapore and Indonesia. Young people in Asia make up more than 50% of the world’s youth population, yet to date, discussions on youth digital citizenship have predominantly focused on the West. This article aims to fill this gap. Additionally, Asia’s global lead in terms of the rate of ICT adoption and smart city innovations warrants more scholarship about its young people’s technology use in the ambits of digital literacy and citizenship. This article will thus critically show how young people in conservative Southeast Asian societies have carved out new mediated practices that support their right to participate and belong, and discuss its significance in producing new ways of looking at digital literacy.

3. Singapore Case Study: Youth Civic Engagement and the ‘Sensing’ of Public Opinion on LGBTs

To effectively ‘actualize’ citizenship and engage in civic action, the young digital citizen needs to display the critical ability to accurately ‘sense’ the public opinion surrounding socio-political issues debated in society. Digital citizens are no longer passive consumers of proprietary public information but play an active role in negotiating the distribution and evaluation of public opinion surrounding social issues on social media. In this section, we interrogate how ubiquitous media and interpersonal

information sources on social media have problematized young users’ ability to evaluate public opinion, forcing us to rethink digital literacy as a set of critical literacies that shape their social practice.

As a form of ‘public conscience’ or a ‘group state of mind,’ public opinion is broadly defined as a reflection of the majority opinion of an issue at any point in time in a given social context (Allport, 1937; Noelle-Neumann, 1974). *Actual* public opinion, however, differs from *perceived* public opinion. The latter deals with individual socio-cognitions processed at two levels where information and attitudes are internalized (i.e., micro-level processes) by deducing societal norms and public attitudes (i.e., macro-level process; Glynn & Huges, 2008). In this perceptual process, citizens make informed conclusions about what others feel and think about an issue in a less scientific and more imprecise manner by ‘quasi-statistically sensing’ the issue opinion distributions in society (Noelle-Neumann, 1993; Scheufele & Moy, 2000). Three main indicators influence online opinion deduction: mass media or proprietor content; user-generated comments and opinions, and; aggregated representations of user-content interactions (Neubaum & Krämer, 2017).

To address cognitive demands needed to assess online public opinion, individuals select informational sources consistent with what they believe others in society are feeling (Stroud, 2008), and heuristically make judgments about what they *perceive* is the public sentiment (Walther & Jang, 2012) and how *credible* these group-based sentiments are (Metzger, Flanagin, & Medders, 2010). This is especially challenging for young people who also need to confront polarized ‘echo chambers’ (Schulz & Roessler, 2012; Sunstein, 2001) and multiple layers of opinion climate indicators (i.e., offline–online, internet–forum) (Nekmat & Gonzenbach, 2012; Yun & Park, 2011) in social media. Our findings below demonstrate how critical literacy and social practice are needed to nurture an informed digital citizenry capable of assessing online public opinion.

3.1. Method

Ten focus group discussions with Singaporean youths were conducted to examine how users evaluate and utilize mass media and interpersonal information cues on social media to gauge the public opinion on LGBTs in Singapore. In the context of Singapore, homosexuality is sanctioned by Section 377A of the Penal Code and LGBT-related issues tend to take media center stage when debates surrounding LGBT policies and events related to LGBT communities and activism take place in the country (see, e.g., Ho, Chen, & Sim, 2013). These groups enabled the study to better uncover the interconnected opinion-formation processes, range of consensus, and diversity of viewpoints *among* ideologically-similar user groups, in order to analyze their ideological group similarities and differences (Donsbach & Traugott, 2008). The relia-

bility of this process is heightened as we take a peripheral and facilitative role in the group discussions as compared to a more central ‘interrogative’ position in one-to-one interviews (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2018). Additionally, grouping users according to similar attitudes on a morally-loaded and contentious issue in Singapore’s context reduces their fear of being socially ostracized for expressing minority opinions during group discussions. Instead, it produces more in-depth findings on the opinion formation process by making participants more willing to link group discussions with their personal issue positions and experiences.

3.2. Focus Group Procedure

A pre-study survey measured participants’ attitudinal position toward homosexual communities and lifestyles on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) according to six statements that included, homosexuality is perfectly acceptable, laws regulating homosexuality should be loosened, and people should accept homosexuals as part of society (e.g., Morrison & Morrison, 2002). Participants were then grouped according to similar attitudes on LGBTs—supportive ($M > 4.01$) and unsupportive ($M < 3.99$). Overall, 46 participants—of which 24 participants supportive toward LGBTs and 22 participants unsupportive toward LGBTs—participated in the focus groups. Of these, 22 were males, 24 were females, 34 were full-time students between the ages of 21 to 24, and 12 were between the ages of 23 and 30 years and working full-time. Five focus group sessions comprised participants who held supportive attitudes and the other five focus groups consisted of participants unsupportive of LGBTs. Each focus group discussion lasted between 50 to 65 minutes on average and comprised four to six participants each.

3.3. Data Analysis and Findings

All sessions were audio-recorded for data analysis purposes with anonymity ensured by the de-identification of participants in the verbatim transcription process. The constant comparison method for categorization of data via frequency, specificity, extensiveness, and similarity (e.g., Krueger & Casey, 2000) followed by selective coding to develop themes in each grouped category was carried out to analyze and interpret findings (see Table 1 in Appendix for an overview of the analytical framework and themes guiding the focus group discussions and data analysis).

3.4. Dependency on Interpersonal Cues for Opinion Climate Formation

Overall, participants were able to clearly differentiate between informational cues from mass media and user-generated comments in social media; citing differences in the roles of the two types of cues to affect their eval-

uation of the public opinion on LGBTs. In this regard, greater dependence on interpersonal sources of information as cues affecting users’ perception of the opinion climate on the issue was found, as evidenced by a respondent’s frustration when s(he) claimed “I hate it when they [news sources] disable comments because in that way, you can’t really read what people are saying” (respondent 41). At a greater level of interpersonal cues dependency, respondents would rely solely on user comments and reactions in social media to assess majority opinion on the issue. This reliance can be attributed to the way information is displayed on social networking sites such as Facebook, where highly visible aggregation of popular user comments and reactions (i.e., number of Likes, Shares) attract users to read other users’ reactions as a “proxy for public opinion,” which could ultimately shape “participants’ beliefs about what other members of the society think” (Lee, 2012, p. 41). To an even greater extent, several respondents mentioned not being able to determine the public opinion on the issue in the absence of such interpersonal opinion cues in social media. These findings echo prior studies that suggest the influence of interpersonal sources of information to veritabily outweigh the effect of mass media on one’s perception of public opinion (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Watts & Dodds, 2007), and that a shift in the locus of power and message control from the media to the people is evident on social media (Glynn, Herbst, Shapiro, Lindeman, & O’Keefe, 2015).

3.5. Juxtaposition of Mass Media and Social Information Cues: Source Ordering and Layering

Participants, ultimately, juxtapose mass media and social information cues against one another to gauge public opinion on social media via two general processes: source *ordering* and *layering*. The sequence in which users noticed the two sources of information and the immediate perception derived from a particular informational source—either from the news proprietor or friend—influences their processing of the information and, consequently, the perception of majority opinion on the issue. Consistent with the two-step flow hypothesis (e.g., Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955), participants generally encounter social informational cues before mass media content, and that most of the media content they encounter on social media were “usually what [their] friends share[d]” (respondent 8). Seeing social informational cues first provides a “halo effect” upon the proprietor information that follows (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), which stimulated increased attention to the media content. Mass media content were then referred mainly to inform participants on why others are interested in this issue or why they should pay attention to it.

Respondents described how attention was given to news reports and other user comments “only when they appear interesting enough or has a lot of likes and shares” (respondent 7). Such numerical aggregations of popu-

larity, and plausibly importance, such as likes, shares, and top comments, bestows an “endorsement heuristic” (Metzger et al., 2010), which lead to the impression that one should believe and pay attention to the media content or user comment because many others have done likewise. As exemplified by respondent 2, “cause[sic] of the number of likes. Like I would be wow(!) So many likes ah [sic], this definitely must see or important.” It was further noted that when users perceived greater significance of the information from social cues that they had seen first, mass media content were referenced for their ‘titles’ and ‘interesting headlines’ as respondents felt online comments to be sufficient indicators, or ‘exemplars,’ of public sentiments on social issues (Zillman & Brosius, 2012). As iterated by respondent 17:

If you want to know how Singaporeans think—that’s generally reflected on the comments section of the news piece shared online. Like when *The Straits Times* posts something...you get a general sensing of how people feel about the topic by reading their comments more than the news article.¹

The first exposure order of user comments was also found to create social informational reliance for opinion climate perception, bypassing the media information that was shared but layering with other interpersonal cues. So, basically, the attentional order became interpersonal cue A → interpersonal cue B, instead of interpersonal cue A → media cue A. On top of this, the use of endorsement heuristics, as discussed earlier, were then utilized to evaluate the relevance of interpersonal cue B in perceiving the opinion climate on the issue. As shared by respondent 39:

I will actually just scroll down to the comments—I won’t look for or actively read the articles my friends post related to LGBTs but I am interested in their comments. In the comments sometimes there’ll be really long posts and people will put the “sad” or “angry” face and some people who will reply “you should just go and live somewhere else” that kind of thing....Yeah, so I get the idea of what people agree on.

These findings illuminate the subversion of the mass media’s role as agenda-setters in the formation of public opinion in social media. That said, as a second order information, mass media sources acted to confirm users’ perceptions of the opinion climate and helped participants also navigate and make sense of the multiple social informational cues online. As mentioned by respondent 21:

The news and videos that they share on the Pink Dot tell me about what Singaporeans think....It made me think whether a lot of other Singaporeans also becoming more open (to homosexuality), because

it seems like my friends on social media also feel that way.²

3.6. *Trans-Border Mass-Interpersonal Blending of Informational Cues*

Notably, findings further suggest a trans-bordered mass-interpersonal blending of foreign media with user comments as users contextualize cues from social sources to situate and interpret foreign news reports to local context to gauge the opinion climate on the issue. As shared by respondent 19:

Facebook shows news from other countries, and other countries have movements that are more open to LGBT people like the UK has this pride day and the US has something similar, so when my friends on Facebook see this sort of news, they will think like ‘yeah, these countries are much more supportive and open than Singapore’ and that’s why maybe (Singaporean) teens nowadays are more open [on LGBT].

The issue in foreign countries as reported in foreign media then stems as a point of reference used to contrast and reinforce their prevailing and local opinion climate perception. As highlighted by respondent 4 who perceived majority Singaporeans to be conservative:

When you compare like what was reported in the BBC or even in Buzzfeed of how the people in USA or Europe are increasingly becoming more open to homosexuality...to the point of legalizing marriage between two men or women or whatever...then you see a lot of Singaporeans on Facebook, Twitter challenging (the news) makes you feel that it is a lost case.

3.7. *Social Identity-Based Opinion Climate Evaluation*

Users were also found to engage in social identity-based, cognitive contrast processing (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) when blending and evaluating the two informational indicators to gauge public opinion on social media. In this process, user’s ideological positioning due to his or her perceived group membership was found to influence their selection of evidence and groups to compare with in bid to defend their perceived membership to ideological in-groups and reaffirm their preconceived attitudes. Such cognitive processes were implicated in how users evaluate and blend mass-interpersonal sources, further showing evidence of extreme hostile exemplars utilized among respondents in both LGBT-supportive and non-supportive groups. Respondent 31, for instance, declared how s(he) would disregard information from recognized opinion leaders and sources who are non-supportive toward LGBTs by mentioning how s(he) particularly disliked “Lawrence Kong....He’s the pastor that

¹ *The Straits Times* is the leading government-owned national newspaper in the country.

² Pink Dot is Singapore’s annual LGBT Pride Day held at Hong Lim Park. Attendees wear pink to show their solidarity and support.

started the White Shirt movement and openly bashes gay people”.³

On the flipside, respondents who were non-supportive of LGBTs mentioned how they would discount the news and opinions of users supporting ‘the Wear White movement,’ a movement initiated by religious groups in Singapore mainly from the Muslim and Christian communities and “wouldn’t read their stuff” (respondent 16) if they were to show up in their social media feed.” Such ‘othering’ of information from ideologically-dissonant groups are hostile exemplars of public opinion, and its contrast processing can be seen to encourage polarized ingroup-outgroup opinion climate perceptions.

3.8. Summary

This case study shows how social media in a conservative environment like Singapore has enabled young people to acquire information and form public opinion in decentralized ways, including negotiating the global flows of information as well as through shared peer information. Information is evaluated and valued in ways that resonate with users’ ideologies produced by their life worlds and experiences. As digital citizens, they play an active role in negotiating the distribution of issue opinions on social media, and often evaluate mainstream media’s indications of public opinion through peer user’s perspectives and experiences. Young people form online public opinion and perform digital citizenship through these critical literacies that allow them to discern information constructively based on social identities that can potentially subvert the role of mass media as agenda-setters. The influence of peer information also illuminates digital citizenship as a social practice in digital literacy that allows users to reflect and act on the world around them, sometimes in ways that challenge mainstream ideologies.

4. Indonesia Case Study: Young Muslim Women’s Groups

The number of Internet users in Indonesia has grown rapidly from only 2 million in 2000 to 143 million in 2017. Eighty-seven percent of the users are on social media (Yuniarni, 2018), and 30 million Internet users are children and teenagers (Gayatri et al., 2015). Following this ascendancy, young Muslim women started gaining visibility as ‘Internet celebrities’ (Abidin, 2016). Notably, they began to be more present in public discussions as they create and participate in informal social-media-based young Muslim women’s groups. This section focuses on these young Muslim women’s groups as representatives of female youth digital citizenship, and with the potential to create alternative publics in the usually male-dominated public cultures. While their male counterpart gained public attention for joining conservative Islamist groups

and doing ‘street politics’ (Hasan, 2015), young Muslim women practise ‘quiet’ acts of citizenship, seemingly revolved only around mundane social practices. However, as this section will demonstrate, young women’s digital literacies allow them to engage peers and garner political potential to participate in civic activities.

This section reports on an analysis of six popular young Muslim women’s groups: Dunia Jilbab (DJ), Ukhti Sally (US), Peduli Jilbab (PJ), Hijabers Community (HC), Jogjakarta Muslimahpreneur (JMP), and Tasikmalaya Hijabers (TH). These groups have more than a million social-media followers combined. They are chosen because they represented the mushrooming of informal collectives organized by young Muslim women facilitated by the increasing access to the Internet and mobile phones. Started between 2010–2015, all the groups’ founders were friends looking for a sense of community and expanded initially through young Muslim women peer networks. The groups had distinct characteristics, and some were critical of the others’ interpretation of Islamic virtues. All of them, however, were committed to promoting their version of pious subjectivity (Mahmood, 2005) based on their interpretations of Islamic teachings for young Muslim women in Indonesia.

4.1. Method

This section draws data collected using the ‘ethnography for the internet’ approach (Hine, 2019). The Internet is understood here as multi-spatial, engaging users in different locations, temporalities, and mobility. Thus, the groups studied here are seen as the ‘field’ itself, requiring the ethnographer to follow their flexibility in using different platforms, locations, and tools online and offline. Specifically, it reports on the social media observation, participant observations of the groups’ gatherings, and interviews with group members. Social media observation of the groups’ accounts on Instagram was conducted from June 2015 to June 2016 and October 2016 to April 2017. Data collection also included participant observations of 24 offline gatherings organized by the young Muslim women’s groups and unstructured interviews with 21 young Muslim women, including the organizers, followers, and lurkers of the groups.

The data was treated as a set of discourses or “a corpus of statements” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 42) analysed using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis or FDA (Kendall & Wickham, 1999; Worthman & Troiano, 2016). FDA investigates: (1) the rules of production of the statements; (2) the rules that determine the borders of the sayable and the visible; (3) the rules that allow the production of new statements, and; (4) the rules that ensure a social practice is material and discursive at the same time. The analysis below focuses on how young women’s pious subjectivity is constructed through the discourses circulating online (social media accounts) and offline

³ The Wear White movement is a multi-faith anti-LGBT coalition group in Singapore. Attendees wear white on the day of the Pink Dot celebration and gather around Hong Lim Park to protest LGBT pride.

(gatherings) (see Table 2 in Appendix for an overview of the young Muslim women's groups studied, their social media following, and the themes emerging from the analysis of their social media accounts).

4.2. Findings: Three Discourses on Young Muslim Women's Digital Citizenship

The analysis, following FDA, examines the ways discourses surrounding young Muslim women as digital citizens are constructed in their social media posts, their gatherings, and the interviews. The following paragraph explains three distinct discourses emerging in the analysis: (1) young Muslim women as feminine, pious, and obedient; (2) young Muslim women as ethical entrepreneurs; and (3) political young Muslim women. Before discussing these, it is necessary to briefly contextualise Indonesia's socio-political context that lays the foundation of the production of these discourses.

Indonesia was under an authoritarian regime called the New Order led by President Suharto for 32 years from 1966 to 1998. The regime eliminated any form of opposition to its patriarchal developmentalist project of state-building. Women's organizations critical of the regime were banned, and women's political expressions were framed as dangerous. The regime installed a new state programme called Guidance of Family Welfare (PKK) which located women's citizenship only in domestic sphere and in their obedience to their husbands, families, and the state (Suryakusuma, 2011; Wieringa, 2002). After the regime fell two decades ago, Islamic political power became increasingly influential, marking a conservative turn (Hasan, 2009; van Bruinessen, 2013). Despite freedom from authoritarian regime, traces of the New Order sexual politics remained and are now reconfigured by the increasingly pious public (Wieringa, 2009, 2015), creating a path of women's citizenship that now involves piety, as analysed below. In particular, they show how social media use help these groups cultivate pious subjectivity as part of everyday self-representation which allows the young Muslim women to make citizenship claims in the domains of the social, cultural, and economic.

4.3. Young Muslim Women as Feminine, Pious, and Obedient

One similarity across the groups' Instagram accounts show they deploy tropes based on the young Muslim women's piety and obedience to religious values. This is visually represented as stereotypically feminine, soft, and sweet on their posts. A sample of Instagram posts by PJ, DJ, US, TH, and HC on February 7, 2016, for instance, reveals these tropes (see Figure 1).

Although the posts are on different topics, they share similar visual language. TH and HC's posts are event announcements. TH's post (a) has a solid bright pink background announcing an event titled 'Becoming an Inde-

pendent Muslimah,' which promotes Muslim women's entrepreneurship. HC's post (b) announces the 'Inspiring Love Stories'. PJ's post (c) promotes an event the group was organizing on the Valentine's Day 2016. US' post (d) is on the theme of love and relationship, particularly marriage proposal. The last image (e) is DJ's post on religious commentary, specifically the issue of *istiqomah* (the quality of being steadfast in one's faith) while donning the veil.

The posts demonstrate the imaginary of the ideal Muslim womanhood and the groups' strategies to maintain their following. With religious commentaries, discussions on veiling, love and relationship, and event invitations, these posts are important for their followers. One participant of HC's gathering, a fresh graduate, said: "It was difficult for me to find religious gatherings for young women. What [HC] discusses are interesting, and I get to meet women my age." Similarly, two university students claimed that they joined DJ to be able to meet "people with the same story." In other words, the young women are looking for a community that could help them learn about Islamic teachings with their peers. Digital citizenship is evident in the social practice of Instagram, first through pious female self-representation, and second, its attendant creation of online and offline communities.

4.4. Young Muslim Women as Ethical Entrepreneurs

These groups also use their social media accounts to promote entrepreneurship that does not focus only for economic gain. As one of the groups' chairwomen affirmed in an interview, it was important followers were interested in becoming entrepreneurs, specifically in *dakwah* (prosestyzation) business (Nisa, 2018)—a kind of business that is based on promoting Islamic teachings and modesty. Two reasons support this emphasis. One is the story of the early lives of Prophet Muhammad and his wife, Khadijah, as merchants. This story had been used in different Islamic movement to encourage Muslims to become entrepreneurs (Hoesterey, 2016). Two is the economic liberalization of Indonesia in combination with the rise of Internet economy in the Southeast Asia region (Google & Temasek, 2017). In an interview in 2015, the chairperson of HC described she wanted HC to facilitate its members in improving themselves as good young Muslim women (by learning about Islamic virtuous behaviours) and in becoming productive (by organizing events that encouraged the members to be entrepreneurs). Similarly, the founder of JMP admitted that the group was created specifically to help fellow young Muslim women learn to build businesses from each other. The groups organized gatherings to teach the principles of ethical entrepreneurialism, how to build brands, and how to make use of online tools. The groups also maintain that a young woman's economic independence does not mean she forgets her religious obligations as a good (future) wife and mother. Digital citizenship is evident in the social practice of multiliteracies—cultural,

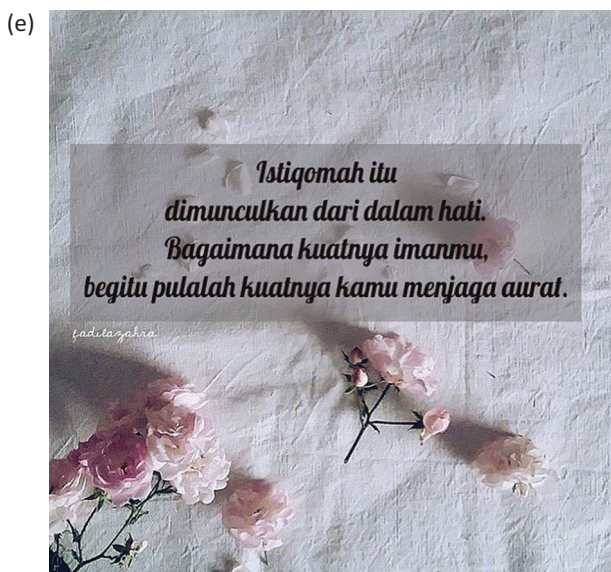


Figure 1. A set of images from the Instagram accounts of (a) Tasikmalaya Hijabers (TH), (b) Hijabers Community (HC), (c) Peduli Jilbab (PJ), (d) Ukhti Sally (US), and (e) Dunia Jilbab (DJ), posted on 7 February 2016.

social, economic—as young Muslim women gain better economic status while also cultivate their piety.

4.5. Political Young Muslim Women

These groups materialise digital citizenship as a social practice by creating alternative publics for civic activities. Evident is how the groups' consistent promotion of pious subjectivity has shaped the political leanings of the organizers and followers. The event of 2017 gubernatorial election in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, is exemplary. The election had the incumbent, Basuki Purnama, in a tight race with another candidate, Anies Baswedan. Before the election began, Purnama, who is a Chinese-Indonesian and Christian—making him a double minority in Indonesia—was accused of religious blasphemy, a criminal offence under Indonesian law. Purnama's religious blasphemy case was made more intense as the Islamist groups organized rallies and protests against him in late 2016, called the '411' (4 November 2016) and '212' (2 December 2016). Reacting to the event, the groups use hashtag activism to actively promote #belaquran (defend the Quran) to support the '411' and '212' rallies. One of the groups, for instance, use terms such as '*aksi*' (action), 'people power', '*supremasi hukum*' (rule of law), and '*keadilan*' (justice). During the election, they also use #muslimvotemuslim—alluding to the fact that Purnama is a Christian and therefore not worthy of their followers' votes. Although political discussion very rarely appear on their Instagram feed, it could be argued that their consistency in promoting Islamic teachings and cultivating their followers' piety serve to ground their political leaning. Through hashtag activism, the space they carve online and offline allows them to create alternative expressions of civic concerns.

4.6. Summary

This section illustrates how digital citizenship can manifest in different forms. As gender and religious identities mark the political positioning of young Muslim women in Indonesia, we should therefore see that digital citizenship does not always require civic engagement as it is conservatively understood (participation in public debates or consistent claim-making in pursuit of social change). Rather, everyday self-representations on social media platforms *condition* the participation of young Muslim women as digital citizens, including their rise as female entrepreneurs and political actants.

5. Conclusion

This article has examined digital citizenship as a subfield of digital literacy research. It has drawn on digital literacy's features of critical literacy and social practice to highlight how digital citizenship is actualized through online engagement that results in civic participation. Further demonstrating digital citizenship through original

empirical case studies with young people in Singapore and Indonesia, this article has de-Westernized digital literacy studies and elucidated Southeast Asian youth digital citizenship as a new mode of civic-making in conservative societies with high media and state controls.

In Singapore, social media such as Facebook has enabled young people to acquire information and form public opinion in decentralized and informal ways. They formed their perception of public opinion on LGBTs by drawing on global and social sources of information. Through sensing and sense-making, they evince a socially and critically literate practice of valuing and trusting information based not solely on state's agenda-setting, but in ways that resonated with the ideologies produced by their own life worlds and experiences.

In Indonesia where the political positioning of young Muslim women is shaped by gender and religious norms, digital citizenship is manifested in quotidian practices on Instagram through the everyday online self-presentation of a feminine and obedient form of pious subjectivity, and its attendant creation of online and offline communities that have also supported new female collectivities and entrepreneurship and women as political agents in the creation of alternate publics. Rather than engage the spectacle of activism and advocacy, these quiet acts of citizenship have also become influential to civic change.

Both case studies share similarities and differences. They show the ubiquity of social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to evince diverse creative civic inputs, ranging from the formation and reformation of public opinions, individual and group identities, and activism and commerce. These civic participations materialize the actioning of critical literacies into social practice: in Singapore, the ability to form public opinion by acquiring, blending, juxtaposing and decoding diverse information from multiple sources and via groups with shared and opposing values and identities; in Indonesia, the public visibility of women through self-representation and social expression via religion, politics and business. These practices, while collective in their public voices, further demonstrate civic participation as singular acts of individuations produced by convergent media and peer platforms. Central to both case studies is not just the spectrum of online participation, but how online participation is enculturated in embodiments that are physical, socio-cognitive and corporeal. It is through these embodied modes that literacy as the civic of citizen and city takes its optimal form as a mode of acting in and on the world.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Appendix
Table 1. Themes and questions in focus group and data analysis.

Themes	Questions
Ideological positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How important are issues related to LGBT to you personally? • What do you the people you know in real life <i>and</i> on social media think about the issue?
Opinion climate estimation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel most Singaporeans (in real life/on social media) are supportive of LGBT?
Opinion climate indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you elaborate on the types of information in social media that give you an idea of what majority of Singaporeans think about LGBT? • Do you seek for such information on social media? • How important are the different types of information to you when you are trying to find out what majority of Singaporeans feel about LGBT?
Mass media cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you elaborate on the types of information from mass media (e.g., news, articles, pictures, etc.) that had enabled you to get an idea of what majority of Singaporeans think about LGBT?
Interpersonal cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the overall, are the people in your social media networks generally supportive or not supportive of LGBT? • Can you elaborate on the types of information your social media networks (e.g., comments, news, reactions, videos, etc.) that helped give you an idea of whether Singaporeans are generally supportive of LGBT or not.
Opinion accuracy and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the different types of information from mass media and social sources on social media that you had mentioned earlier, please share how much do you trust and believe the information coming from them.

Table 2. Lists the young Muslim women's groups studied, their popularity, and the themes emerging from their Instagram posts.

Name of group	City	Number of local chapters ^a	Active online	Active offline	Number of followers on Instagram ^b	Average number of posts monthly ^c	Themes of Instagram posts
Dunia Jilbab (DJ)	Jakarta	0	Yes	No	1,000,000	1,158	a) Religious commentary b) Productivity c) News related to Muslims d) Veiling e) Love and relationship f) Family g) Announcement of events h) Advertorial
Ukhti Sally (US)	Bekasi	0	Yes	Rarely	400,000	143	a) Religious commentary b) Productivity c) News related to Muslims d) Veiling e) Love and relationship f) Family g) Announcement of events h) Advertorial
Peduli Jilbab (PJ)	Depok	44	Yes	Yes	280,000	116	a) Religious commentary b) Productivity c) News related to Muslims d) Veiling e) Love and relationship f) Family g) Announcement of events h) Advertorial
Hijabers Community (HC)	Jakarta	8	Yes	Yes	100,000	42	a) Announcement of events b) Religious commentary c) Advertorial d) News related to Muslims
Jogjakarta Muslimahpreneur Community (JMP)	Yogyakarta	0	Yes	Yes	7,000	27	a) Announcement of events b) Religious commentary c) Advertorial d) News related to Muslims
Tasikmalaya Hijabers (TH)	Tasikmalaya	0	Yes	Rarely	1,500	5	a) Announcement of events b) Advertorial

Notes: a) As of 2018. b) The count is approximate in 2018 based on each account's profile page. c) Average of posts from 1 June to 31 December 2015.