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Digital Ethics and Legal Responsibility in Social Media Use among University Students: A Normative Analysis of Indonesian Law

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Abstract. *The widespread use of social media has transformed communication among university students, creating opportunities for learning and interaction while increasing the risk of digital ethics violations. This situation highlights the need to strengthen moral awareness and legal responsibility in digital environments. This study aims to examine forms of digital ethics violations among university students, analyze them through moral theories and social responsibility, and identify strategies for strengthening digital ethics awareness. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed through library research, using secondary data from scientific books, journal articles, previous studies, and relevant legislation, particularly Law Number 1 of 2024 on Electronic Information and Transactions and Law Number 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection. The findings identify digital ethics violations, including hoaxes, hate speech, cyberbullying, privacy violations, and harmful content. These behaviors are associated with limited digital literacy, inadequate ethics education, online anonymity, peer influence, popularity-seeking, and weak self-control. Deontological, utilitarian, and virtue ethics reveal conflicts with moral duties, social welfare, and core virtues. This study contributes to legal and ethical discourse by recommending curriculum-based digital ethics education, stronger digital literacy, positive online cultures, and collaboration among universities, families, communities, and government to promote lawful and responsible social media use.*

Keywords: *Digital Privacy Rights; Cyberbullying Liability; Digital Ethics Violations; Social Responsibility; Personal Data Protection.*

1. Introduction

The development of information and communication technology in the digital era has brought significant changes to people's lives. The internet, initially used as a means of exchanging information, has evolved into a social space that enables individuals to interact without the

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constraints of space and time (Castells, 2010; Van Dijk, 2020). One of the most influential products of this technological development is social media, which has transformed conventional communication into fast, interactive, and massive digital communication (Fuchs, 2021). College students are a group with a very high level of social media usage. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), Facebook, and YouTube have become integral to daily life, particularly among younger generations and college students. As a generation raised in a digital environment, college students readily adapt to technological advancements. They use social media for various purposes, including communication, information seeking, academic activities, social networking, entertainment, and self-expression (Budiana & Rohmah, 2025). Furthermore, social media has become an important space for students to construct their identities and express opinions on various social, political, economic, and cultural issues.

Social media offers various benefits for students, including rapid access to information, broader social networks, learning support, and opportunities for academic and professional collaboration. It also facilitates knowledge sharing, academic discussions, and participation in social issues through digital campaigns and online advocacy. However, its misuse can lead to behaviors that violate social norms, ethics, and the law, including misinformation, hate speech, cyberbullying, defamation, privacy violations, and inappropriate content (Iftikhar et al., 2025; Rakhmawan et al., 2025; Aminuddin et al., 2026). Such practices demonstrate that technological advancement does not necessarily correspond with increased moral and ethical awareness. Users may disregard ethical considerations online, perceiving digital spaces as free from the normative boundaries governing everyday social interactions. Consequently, behaviors considered unacceptable offline may become normalized on social media. In Indonesia, these violations may be addressed under Law Number 1 of 2024 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 11 of 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions (UU ITE) and Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection. These legal frameworks reinforce the importance of ethical awareness and responsible social media use among students.

Digital ethics is increasingly important among university students, who, as intellectuals and agents of social change, are expected to demonstrate moral responsibility and use social media wisely. Beyond academic competence, students must uphold integrity, ethical values, and social responsibility in digital spaces. However, digital ethics violations remain evident in cases involving hoaxes, cyberbullying, and insulting posts targeting individuals or groups, some of which have led to legal proceedings (Tarigan, 2025). This situation reflects concerns about students' awareness of digital ethics (Rawanoko et al., 2021). These issues are further complicated by social media's ability to disseminate information rapidly, allowing individual posts to reach thousands or even millions of users within minutes (Pratama, 2020; Johnson, 2021). Consequently, unverified information can trigger misunderstandings, create social conflicts, and harm others. Such circumstances highlight the importance of recognizing the moral and social consequences of digital actions. Furthermore, anonymity on certain platforms may encourage unethical behavior because users perceive themselves as less accountable for their actions. Nevertheless, digital anonymity does not eliminate moral responsibility, as every

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online action can have real consequences for individuals and society. Therefore, strengthening digital ethical awareness among university students is essential.

From a moral philosophy perspective, the use of social media cannot be separated from the concept of individual responsibility towards fellow human beings. Every individual has a moral obligation to respect the rights of others, maintain human dignity, and avoid actions that could harm others. These principles should apply in the digital space as they do in real life. Thus, digital ethics can be understood as the application of moral values in the use of information and communication technology. The study of digital ethics is also relevant due to the various regulations governing people's activities in cyberspace. The Indonesian government has issued various regulations related to the use of information technology, including Law No. 1 of 2024 on Electronic Information and Transactions (Electronic Information and Transactions Law/UU ITE) and Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection. These regulations demonstrate that digital activity is not a lawless space, but rather one that remains subject to prevailing legal and social norms.

A legal approach alone is insufficient to address ethical challenges in social media use, as prevention also requires strengthening moral awareness and social responsibility. Previous studies have examined digital ethics from different perspectives. Mohamed (2013) analyzed cyber laws and their interaction with traditional laws in combating cybercrime in Malaysia, while Benzmiller (2012) discussed the potential criminal liability of individuals who witness cyberbullying without intervening. Both primarily emphasized legal responsibility rather than the broader behavioral and moral dimensions of digital ethics. Meanwhile, Burr et al. (2020) explored ethical issues in digital well-being, and Prasetiyo et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of digital education in developing learners' understanding of online behavior and responsibility. Although these studies provide valuable insights, further synthesis is needed to connect digital ethics violations among university students with their contributing factors, moral implications, and preventive strategies. Therefore, this study examines digital ethics in social media use through an integrated perspective encompassing behavior, moral philosophy, social responsibility, and ethical education.

Digital ethics involves not only compliance with technology-related regulations but also moral awareness, ethical judgment, and social responsibility. Deontological ethics, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics provide complementary perspectives for analyzing digital ethics violations and promoting responsible online behavior. Accordingly, this study contributes theoretically by integrating moral philosophy and social responsibility into the analysis of digital ethics among university students, while its practical contribution lies in informing digital ethics education to strengthen students' digital literacy, self-control, respect for privacy, and responsible communication. Relevant Indonesian regulations, including the Electronic Information and Transactions Law and the Personal Data Protection Law, provide additional legal context for distinguishing ethical violations from conduct that constitutes a legal offense. This study aims to examine the forms and contributing factors of digital ethics violations in social media use among

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university students, analyze these violations through moral theories and social responsibility, and identify strategies to strengthen students' digital ethics awareness. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What forms of digital ethics violations occur in social media use among university students, and what factors contribute to these violations?
2. How can digital ethics violations be analyzed through moral theories and the concept of social responsibility?
3. What efforts can be undertaken to strengthen digital ethics awareness among university students?

2. Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method to examine digital ethics in social media use among university students from the perspectives of morality and social responsibility. The qualitative method was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of social phenomena through the interpretation of relevant information sources, while the descriptive approach helps identify forms of digital ethics violations, their contributing factors, and strategies for improving ethical awareness in academic environments. This study adopted normative and conceptual approaches. The normative approach was used to examine ethical principles, moral theories, and legal provisions governing social media use. Meanwhile, the conceptual approach explored key concepts related to digital ethics, social responsibility, digital literacy, and social media user behavior. Combining these approaches allowed the study to assess the extent to which students' social media practices align with established ethical and moral principles, social expectations, and applicable legal provisions, thereby providing a foundation for promoting responsible digital behavior.

This study used secondary data collected through library research from various relevant and credible sources. These sources included scientific books on ethics, moral philosophy, digital communication, and social media; national and international journals addressing digital ethics, digital literacy, cyber ethics, and user behavior; and relevant regulations, particularly Law No. 1 of 2024 concerning the Second Amendment to Law No. 11 of 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions (Electronic Information and Transactions Law/UU ITE) and Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection. Additional sources comprised research reports, official documents from government agencies and international organizations, and statistical data on social media usage from reliable publications. These sources were selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of digital ethics among university students. Data were collected through documentation and literature review, involving the systematic examination of relevant documents, articles, reports, regulations, theories, and previous research findings. Sources were assessed based on their credibility and relevance, then classified into thematic categories covering digital ethics violations, contributing factors, moral theories, and potential solutions.

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The collected data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis, comprising data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and categorizing relevant information from the literature review while excluding materials unrelated to the research focus. The selected data were then systematically presented in narrative form to examine digital ethics violations, their contributing factors, moral implications, and potential solutions. Conclusions were drawn in accordance with the research questions and objectives to identify strategies for strengthening students' social responsibility in social media use. To ensure research credibility and reliability, source triangulation was employed by comparing information from books, scientific journals, laws and regulations, and previous studies. This technique was chosen to verify consistency across sources, enhance the credibility of the findings, and ensure academic accountability. Through these procedures, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of digital ethics issues and identify practical strategies for fostering a more responsible digital culture among university students.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Forms of Digital Ethics Violations Among Students and Factors Causing Digital Ethics Violations

Social media is an internet-based platform that allows users to create, share, and interact with various forms of digital content. The main characteristics of social media are interactivity, user participation, connectedness, and the speed of information dissemination (Nasrullah, 2022). For students, social media serves various important functions. In addition to being a means of communication, social media is also used for academic activities, developing professional networks, promoting organizational activities, and even as a means of self-actualization. Social media has even become part of students' social identities in their daily lives. However, the high intensity of social media use also carries various risks. Students can be exposed to invalid information, become victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying, and become involved in digital conflicts that impact their real lives. Furthermore, the viral culture that has developed on social media often encourages users to prioritize popularity over moral considerations. This phenomenon demonstrates that social media use is not only related to technical aspects, but also closely related to ethical and moral aspects. Therefore, an understanding of digital ethics is crucial for students to be able to use social media positively and responsibly.

The development of social media has created a vast communication space for students. Freedom to access and disseminate information offers numerous benefits in supporting academic and social activities. However, on the other hand, this freedom has also given rise to increasingly complex forms of digital ethics violations. Digital ethics violations are essentially actions that violate moral norms, social values, and the principle of responsibility in the use of information technology. The phenomenon of digital ethics violations among students demonstrates that technological advancements have not always been accompanied by an increase in user moral awareness. Various actions taken through social media are often

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considered ordinary activities, yet they have serious impacts on individuals and society. Based on the results of a literature review, several forms of digital ethics violations are most frequently encountered among students.

The spread of false information, or hoaxes, is one of the most common violations of digital ethics on social media. Hoaxes refer to false or inaccurate information presented as factual, whether spread intentionally or unintentionally due to users' inability to verify information (Aminuddin et al., 2026; Yohanes et al., 2026). Students, as active social media users, have considerable potential to disseminate information. However, not all students possess sufficient digital literacy to distinguish valid information from misleading content, resulting in information being shared without prior verification. The spread of hoaxes can mislead the public, trigger social conflict, and cause economic losses. In Indonesia, Law No. 1 of 2024 on Electronic Information and Transactions regulates certain forms of false information dissemination through electronic systems, subject to the applicable legal elements. This regulation emphasizes the importance of responsible digital communication. From an ethical perspective, disseminating unverified information reflects a lack of honesty and responsibility. Therefore, students must critically evaluate information before sharing it on social media.

Hate speech is a form of communication that contains elements of insult, discrimination, or provocation against individuals or groups based on social identities such as religion, race, ethnicity, gender, or political views. Social media often becomes a vehicle for the spread of hate speech because it provides a space for users to express their opinions openly (Azhar & Soponyono, 2020). In many cases, students engage in online debates that escalate into personal attacks and insults against others. Hate speech violates the principles of ethical communication because it disrespects human dignity and the right of every individual to be treated fairly. Furthermore, hate speech has the potential to trigger broader social conflict if not properly managed.

Cyberbullying is an act of bullying carried out through digital media with the aim of hurting, humiliating, or intimidating others. Cyberbullying can take the form of negative comments, insults, spreading rumors, verbal abuse, and even the unauthorized publication of someone's personal information (Adnan et al., 2024). Cyberbullying is a serious problem among college students because it can have a significant psychological impact on victims. Victims of cyberbullying often experience stress, anxiety, loss of self-confidence, and even depression. This phenomenon demonstrates that some social media users still lack awareness of the importance of empathy and respect for others in digital interactions. Yet, every individual has the right to receive decent treatment both in the real world and online.

Privacy is the right of every individual to control their personal information (Westin, 2017). In the digital age, privacy violations have become an increasingly common form of ethical misconduct. These violations include the unauthorized distribution of private photos, publication of personal data, misuse of digital identities, and dissemination of private

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conversation recordings (Ramadhan & Nuraini, 2025). Many students remain unaware of the potential consequences of such actions. In Indonesia, Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection provides a legal framework for protecting personal data and regulating its processing. The unauthorized disclosure or misuse of personal data may violate this law, depending on the circumstances and applicable legal provisions. Furthermore, social media is frequently used to disseminate violent, pornographic, gambling-related, and other harmful content. Students who access or share such content may negatively affect themselves and their social environment. From an ethical perspective, these actions contradict social responsibility and respect for individual rights, highlighting the importance of protecting privacy and using social media responsibly.

The rise in digital ethics violations among students is not without cause. Various factors influence the behavior of social media users, leading them to engage in actions that violate moral and ethical norms. Digital literacy is an individual's ability to understand, evaluate, and use digital information critically and responsibly (Ministry of Communication and Informatics of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024). Low digital literacy is one of the main causes of various ethical violations on social media (Sulianta, 2020). Students who lack adequate digital literacy skills tend to easily believe information circulating online without first verifying it. As a result, they have the potential to spread hoaxes and misleading information. Furthermore, low digital literacy also leads to a lack of understanding regarding digital security risks, personal data protection, and the rights and obligations of social media users.

Many students acquire technological skills independently without formal education in digital ethics. Consequently, they may understand how to use social media but lack awareness of the moral and social responsibilities associated with its use. This gap in digital ethics education can contribute to various forms of online misconduct (Benzmiller, 2012) Furthermore, social media anonymity may create a false sense of security, encouraging users to engage in behaviors they would avoid in face-to-face interactions. Feeling less accountable for their actions, some individuals may spread misinformation, insult others, or engage in cyberbullying. Additionally, digital environments influence users' behavioral patterns through social norms and peer interactions. When unethical practices become common within online communities, they may gradually be perceived as acceptable. Students exposed to environments characterized by hate speech and misinformation may consequently imitate such behaviors without fully recognizing their harmful social consequences.

The growth of social media has given rise to a viral culture that encourages users to gain as much attention as possible (Mohamed, 2013; Raharjo, 2021). The desire for likes, views, followers, or popularity often leads users to ignore ethical considerations. Many users spread sensational information, engage in provocation, or create controversial content to increase popularity. In such circumstances, moral values often override the desire for social recognition. Another internal factor that influences us is low self-control. Social media allows users to respond to information instantly without adequate reflection. As a result, many users post abusive

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comments, spread unverified information, or take other impulsive actions. This lack of self-control demonstrates that social media use requires not only technical skills but also emotional and moral maturity

3.2. Analysis of Digital Ethics Violations Based on Moral Theory

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that examines moral values and principles governing human behavior and distinguishing right from wrong. According to Bertens (2018), ethics addresses not only human actions but also how individuals ought to act, providing a normative basis for moral decision-making. Although ethics and law both regulate behavior, law relies on formal rules and sanctions, whereas ethics emphasizes moral awareness and adherence to accepted values (Rahardjo, 2014; Suseno, 2017). Consequently, an action may be legally permissible yet ethically questionable if it contradicts prevailing moral principles (Keraf, 2019). Ethics therefore contributes to social order, interpersonal harmony, and collective responsibility. However, technological advancements have introduced increasingly complex moral challenges. Digital communication transcends geographical and temporal boundaries, creating new opportunities for ethical violations. In this context, digital ethics serves as an essential framework for guiding responsible technology use and ensuring that online interactions remain consistent with moral principles and social responsibility.

Digital ethics refers to the application of moral principles to the use of information and communication technology to ensure that technological developments are utilized responsibly without harming individuals or society. Its significance has increased alongside the widespread adoption of the internet and social media, which have introduced emerging ethical challenges, including personal data theft, misinformation, cyberbullying, and copyright infringement (Floridi, 2013; Ramadhan & Nuraini, 2025). Digital ethics emphasizes that users remain morally accountable for their actions in digital environments, which should be regarded as extensions of social life rather than spaces free from ethical constraints. Its fundamental principles include responsible technology use, respect for personal privacy, honesty in information dissemination, protection of intellectual property rights, and the avoidance of harmful online behavior. These principles provide normative guidelines for users to navigate digital interactions ethically, minimize potential harm, and contribute to a safe, respectful, and responsible digital culture.

The deontological theory developed by Immanuel Kant emphasizes that an action is judged right or wrong based on its underlying moral obligation, not on its consequences. According to this theory, an action is considered good or bad not based on its consequences, but rather on whether the action aligns with moral obligations. Kant argued that humans, as rational beings, have the ability to determine the right course of action based on reason. Therefore, every individual has a moral obligation to act in accordance with universal principles applicable to everyone. This principle is known as the categorical imperative.

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Deontological theory emphasizes the obligation to follow universal moral principles in all actions. In social media use, students must act responsibly by avoiding hoaxes, cyberbullying, and unauthorized disclosure of personal information. Sharing unverified information violates the duty of honesty, even without malicious intent, because it disregards the obligation to communicate truthfully (Rawanoko et al., 2021). Similarly, cyberbullying contradicts the principle that every individual must be treated as an end in themselves rather than merely as a means to achieve personal interests. Insulting or humiliating others for entertainment or popularity is therefore morally unacceptable. From this perspective, personal benefits, including increased followers or online recognition, cannot justify unethical behavior. Accordingly, honesty, truthfulness, and respect for human dignity should guide students' digital interactions, regardless of the potential consequences or personal advantages involved.

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory developed by Jeremy Bentham and later refined by John Stuart Mill, which evaluates the morality of an action based on its consequences. According to this theory, an action is considered morally right when it produces the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Its central principle is the maximization of collective happiness and well-being, whereby the benefits and harms resulting from an action determine its moral value (Mill, 2015; Adnan et al., 2024). In the context of social media use, utilitarianism provides a framework for assessing whether digital activities generate positive outcomes for society or cause harm to others. Therefore, users should consider the broader social implications of their posts and interactions before sharing content or engaging in online communication.

From a utilitarian perspective, social media content is considered ethical when it provides benefits through education, information, or entertainment to a broad audience. For example, disseminating educational information about health, education, or relevant social issues can generate positive impacts by increasing public knowledge and awareness. Conversely, spreading hoaxes is considered unethical because it can trigger public panic, create misunderstandings, damage individuals' reputations, and contribute to social conflict. Such actions are morally unjustifiable when their harmful consequences outweigh their potential benefits. Accordingly, utilitarianism emphasizes that the ethical evaluation of digital communication should consider both the scale of its benefits and the extent of its potential harm to society (Ilham & Riyanto, 2025).

Cyberbullying is similarly unjustifiable under utilitarianism because it generates greater suffering than happiness. Victims may experience serious psychological distress, whereas the perpetrator's perceived benefits, such as entertainment or temporary satisfaction, are generally insignificant compared with the harm inflicted (Avianingrum, 2024; Fitri & Rahmadhani, 2024). This imbalance demonstrates why digital actions should be evaluated according to their overall consequences for those affected. In this regard, utilitarianism encourages students to develop greater awareness of the social impact of their online behavior and to evaluate the potential outcomes of their digital interactions. Before publishing or sharing content, students should

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consider whether their actions will benefit society or produce greater harm, thereby promoting more responsible and ethically informed social media use.

Virtue ethics, rooted in Aristotle's philosophy, emphasizes moral character rather than duties or consequences. Aristotle argued that human flourishing (eudaimonia) can be achieved through cultivating virtues such as honesty, courage, responsibility, temperance, empathy, and practical wisdom. These virtues develop through consistent practice and shape individuals' moral decisions and behavior. From this perspective, ethical actions reflect good character, whereas misconduct indicates deficiencies in moral virtues. In social media use, students with strong moral character are more likely to communi cate honestly, act responsibly, and exercise prudence in digital interactions (Pratama, 2020; Johnson, 2021). They are also less likely to spread unverified information, disregard differing opinions, or harm others online. Therefore, virtue ethics highlights the importance of developing internal moral values that encourage responsible digital behavior beyond mere compliance with external rules and regulations.

Spreading hoaxes, engaging in hate speech, and violating privacy reflect deficiencies in moral character, particularly honesty, empathy, responsibility, and self-control. Virtue ethics emphasizes that moral character develops through continuous practice and habituation (Burr et al., 2020). Therefore, digital ethics education should extend beyond teaching regulations and the consequences of online misconduct to cultivating lasting moral values. Students should develop habits that promote responsible technology use, respect differing opinions, and consider others' well-being. By integrating character development into digital ethics education, universities can encourage students to internalize and consistently apply moral principles in their online interactions. From this perspective, ethical digital behavior represents not merely compliance with regulations or consideration of consequences, but also an expression of cultivated moral character and a commitment to social responsibility.

Social responsibility refers to an individual's obligation to consider the societal impact of their actions. In the digital context, it involves recognizing that every post, comment, and online interaction can affect others. As members of the intellectual community, university students have an important role in fostering a healthy digital environment by disseminating accurate information, improving public literacy, and promoting respectful communication (Budiana & Rohmah, 2025). Digital social responsibility includes verifying information, respecting differing opinions, protecting personal privacy, and avoiding actions that may trigger social conflict. These principles help ensure that social media contributes positively to society. Therefore, responsible digital engagement requires not only technological competence but also ethical awareness and a strong moral foundation. Integrating digital ethics and social responsibility into students' online behavior can promote constructive interactions and ensure that digital activities benefit both individuals and the wider community

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3.3. Legal Review of Digital Ethics Violations and Strategies for Strengthening Digital Ethics Among Students

Digital ethics violations may involve not only moral concerns but also legal consequences. In Indonesia, the Law No. 1 of 2024 concerning the Second Amendment to Law No. 11 of 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions (UU ITE) and Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection provides a legal framework for regulating activities in digital spaces and addressing certain unlawful conduct through electronic media, including social media. Potential violations include the dissemination of false information, defamation, hate speech, the incitement of hatred based on ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations, and unauthorized access to electronic systems. However, the legal consequences of such conduct depend on the applicable statutory provisions and whether the relevant legal elements are fulfilled. The ITE Law thus demonstrates that freedom of expression in digital spaces is not absolute and must be exercised with consideration for the rights of others and applicable legal obligations (Fuchs, 2021; Hanfi, 2025).

Nevertheless, effective digital governance requires more than the existence of legal regulations. Ali et al. (2024) emphasize the need to revise and harmonize existing regulations, strengthen institutional capacities, and foster collaboration among stakeholders to establish a secure digital ecosystem. These measures highlight the importance of aligning legal frameworks with institutional implementation and public awareness. For university students, understanding the legal boundaries of online communication should therefore complement the development of moral awareness and social responsibility. Digital ethics education can help students recognize potentially harmful online behavior, evaluate the consequences of their actions, and communicate responsibly. Accordingly, legal enforcement and preventive education should function as complementary approaches to reducing digital ethics violations and promoting safer social media use.

The development of digital technology has increased the value of personal data and intensified the need to protect individuals' privacy in digital environments. In Indonesia, Law No. 27 of 2022 concerning Personal Data Protection (Personal Data Protection Law) establishes a legal framework for safeguarding personal information and recognizing individuals' rights over their data. In social media use, university students should understand that collecting, using, or disclosing another person's personal data without a valid legal basis or consent, where required, may violate privacy rights and applicable legal provisions. Therefore, protecting personal information should be regarded not merely as an individual ethical obligation but also as an essential component of responsible digital citizenship. These principles are particularly relevant in academic environments, where students need to develop awareness of the consequences of sharing information about others without authorization.

Subhan and Muttaqi (2024) and Aminuddin et al. (2026) demonstrate the legal implications of personal data misuse through a case involving the disclosure of customers' personal information

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to third parties and the dissemination of statements that harmed their reputations. Their analysis indicates that such conduct may constitute an unlawful act, particularly when the relevant legal elements, including intent where required, are established. The enactment of the Personal Data Protection Law seeks to guarantee citizens' rights to personal data protection while fostering public awareness and respect for privacy. However, the existence of legislation alone is insufficient to ensure effective protection. Appropriate implementation and enforcement are necessary to prevent unauthorized access, misuse, and disclosure of personal information. Accordingly, strengthening digital ethics among university students requires both an understanding of legal obligations and the consistent practice of respecting others' privacy in online interactions (Prasetiyo et al., 2022).

Ethics and law have distinct but complementary roles in regulating human behavior, including interactions in digital environments. Law establishes formal and binding rules, whereas ethics provides moral principles that guide individuals in determining appropriate conduct. Not every unethical action necessarily constitutes a legal violation, as legal consequences depend on applicable provisions and the fulfillment of specific legal elements (Pratama, 2020; Johnson, 2021). Nevertheless, digital ethics violations, such as disrespectful communication, irresponsible information sharing, and privacy violations, may lead to more serious legal consequences depending on the circumstances. Therefore, strengthening digital ethics awareness among university students is an important preventive measure to encourage responsible online behavior and reduce the risk of legal violations in digital spaces.

Strengthening digital ethics among university students requires a comprehensive and sustainable approach that combines moral education, digital literacy, self-regulation, and institutional support. Although legal frameworks provide formal boundaries for online behavior, their effectiveness depends on proper implementation and public awareness. Iskandar and Faozi (2025) found that, despite the availability of legal instruments, implementation challenges and low digital literacy continue to hinder efforts to address hoaxes in the post-truth era. Their findings highlight the importance of strengthening digital ethics through preventive education and collaboration among stakeholders, rather than relying exclusively on law enforcement. In this context, universities have a strategic responsibility to develop students' ethical awareness and encourage responsible participation in digital environments.

One important strategy is to integrate digital ethics education into higher education curricula. Such integration can help students understand the moral principles, legal boundaries, and social consequences associated with social media use (Budiana & Rohmah, 2025). Educational activities should address issues such as misinformation, cyberbullying, privacy violations, hate speech, and responsible communication. In addition, strengthening digital literacy is essential to enable students to evaluate information critically, identify potentially misleading content, verify sources, and recognize digital security risks. These competencies can be developed through seminars, workshops, training sessions, and educational campaigns involving universities, government institutions, and community organizations. By combining ethical

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reflection with practical digital skills, educational institutions can help students make informed decisions and respond more responsibly to challenges in online environments.

Another essential strategy is to cultivate a positive digital culture while strengthening students' self-control. Social media should be encouraged as a platform for learning, collaboration, knowledge sharing, and personal development rather than a space for hostility or irresponsible information dissemination. Universities can support this objective by promoting respectful communication, openness to different perspectives, and respect for individual privacy (Johnson, 2021). At the individual level, students need to develop the habit of considering the potential consequences of their online actions before publishing or sharing content. The principle of "filter before sharing" can serve as a practical reminder to verify information, assess its relevance, and consider whether it may harm others. Stronger self-regulation can reduce impulsive responses and encourage students to take greater responsibility for their digital behavior.

Finally, sustainable improvements require collaboration among universities, families, government institutions, and the wider community. Universities can provide structured education and character development, families can reinforce moral values and responsible technology use, and the government can establish and implement regulations that support a safe digital environment. Community organizations can complement these efforts through public education and awareness campaigns. As emphasized by Iskandar and Faozi (2025), improving digital literacy and strengthening cooperation among stakeholders are important long-term measures for addressing misinformation. At the same time, legal enforcement should be implemented consistently, proportionately, and without discrimination to ensure fair treatment under applicable regulations. Integrating education, literacy development, self-regulation, positive digital culture, and fair law enforcement can help cultivate university students who are technologically competent and committed to ethical conduct and social responsibility in digital life.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that digital ethics is an essential component of responsible social media use among university students. The main findings indicate that digital ethics violations include misinformation, hate speech, cyberbullying, privacy violations, copyright infringement, and the dissemination of harmful content. These behaviors are associated with internal factors, such as limited moral awareness and self-control, as well as external factors, including inadequate digital literacy, insufficient ethics education, online anonymity, peer influence, and the pursuit of popularity. The analysis through deontological, utilitarian, and virtue ethics perspectives demonstrates that such behaviors conflict with moral obligations, generate social harm, and reflect deficiencies in virtues such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility. Some violations may also entail legal consequences under applicable legislation, depending on the circumstances and fulfillment of statutory requirements.

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These findings highlight the importance of integrating ethical awareness, digital literacy, and character development into efforts to promote responsible digital behavior. Universities should incorporate digital ethics into curricula and provide relevant training, while students should verify information, respect privacy, and communicate responsibly. The government should strengthen preventive education alongside appropriate law enforcement, supported by collaboration among educational institutions, families, and communities.

This study is limited by its qualitative descriptive approach and reliance on secondary data obtained through literature review. Consequently, it provides a conceptual analysis rather than direct empirical evidence of students' digital behavior or the prevalence of specific violations. Future research should employ surveys, interviews, or field studies to examine students' digital practices, investigate contextual factors influencing ethical behavior, and evaluate the effectiveness of digital ethics education programs. Such research could provide empirical insights into developing more effective interventions and fostering a responsible digital culture among university students.

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