

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARTICIPATORY CITIZENSHIP SKILLS: A BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between social media and participatory citizenship skills through a bibliometric and qualitative literature review approach. The study analyzed 120 articles published between 2021 and 2025 and indexed in the Scopus database. Literature selection was conducted using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) procedure, while bibliometric mapping was performed using VOSviewer to identify major research themes, keyword networks, and intellectual structures within the field. The findings reveal that the knowledge structure of social media and participatory citizenship is organized into four major clusters: conceptual, pedagogical, participatory-political, and methodological. The analysis shows that digital citizenship extends beyond technical digital skills and encompasses ethical, critical, and reflective competencies required for responsible engagement in digital environments. Social media has expanded opportunities for civic participation by facilitating communication, collaboration, and collective action; however, it also introduces challenges such as misinformation, polarization, and superficial forms of engagement. These findings suggest that citizenship education should move beyond knowledge transmission toward the development of participatory competencies supported by digital literacy, awareness of digital rights and responsibilities, and the cultivation of healthy digital cultures. This study contributes a conceptual framework for understanding how meaningful, measurable, and responsible citizen participation can be fostered in the digital era.

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INTRODUCTIONS

The development of social media has changed the way citizens obtain information, form opinions, and express political and social positions. In an increasingly dense digital landscape, participation no longer takes place only through formal forums or institutional channels, but also through comments, content sharing, online petitions, hashtag campaigns, and platform-based solidarity actions. In this context, bibliometrics becomes important because it allows researchers to read the direction of knowledge, identify dominant themes, and see how the network of citations shapes certain intellectual traditions. Bibliometric approaches are also increasingly relevant as analytical tools such as Scopus, VOSviewer, and Bibliometrix encourage more systematic and cross-disciplinary mapping of the literature (Donthu et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the discourse on digital citizenship demands a more thorough distinction between digital rights, digital literacy, and digital citizenship practices. Pangrazio and Sefton-Green emphasized that digital rights, digital citizenship, and digital literacy are not identical terms, but three conceptual layers that are interconnected but have different functions in media life. This distinction is important because social media is often considered sufficient to facilitate participation, whereas meaningful participation requires the competence to assess information, understand ethical boundaries, and manage power relations in the digital space. In other words, social media only provides participation infrastructure, while the quality of participation is determined by the citizenry capacity of its users (Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021).

Recent studies also show that participatory citizenship skills cannot be narrowed down to symbolic activities. Peart et al. show that digital and socio-civic skills are directly related to the participation profile of young people and to their ability to take an active role in the digital democratic environment. This means that participation is not enough to be read as the frequency of uploads or the intensity of online engagement, but rather as the capacity to formulate arguments, collaborate, test information, and interact responsibly on public issues. This perspective provides a solid basis for this article to assess social media as a space for civic learning, not just a space for social communication (Peart et al., 2022).

Although the literature on digital citizenship, civic engagement, and social media is growing rapidly, the knowledge map linking the three is still fragmented. He and Li, through bibliometrics on digital literacy and citizenship, show that studies in this area are growing towards three main trends, namely digital citizenship competence, digital literacy education, and digital mental-emotional aspects. However, the study also marks three major challenges, namely digital ethics and security, the digital divide, and the uneven digital education. The gap lies in the lack of strong integration between digital literacy studies and truly platform-based civic participation studies, especially on social media as an arena of public articulation (He & Li, 2025).

Another gap appears at the methodological level. Firdauz and Sobari point out that research on the use of social media in political campaigns has developed rapidly, but is still dominated by mapping on the topic of political communication and campaigns, rather than on civic competencies that underpin participation itself. In other words, a lot of research stops at the impact of social media on participation, but it hasn't gone far enough to explore what skills make that participation quality. Therefore, this article positions itself to close the gap between bibliometric studies, social media studies, and participatory citizenship studies (Firdauz & Sobari, 2024).

The latest civics education literature places social media as a medium that can expand the reach of civic engagement learning. Mulyono et al. explained that online civic engagement is a form of citizen involvement carried out through digital media, including social media, and does not have to be understood as slacktivism. This emphasis is important because it provides space for more fluid forms of participation, such as public discussion, community mobilization, and the dissemination of civic information. Thus, social media is not only a tool for spreading messages, but also an arena for forming public awareness and reinterpreting civic responsibility (Mulyono et al., 2022).

In the context of measurement, Connolly and Miller show that digital citizenship can be measured more strictly through psychometric instruments that map citizens' activities in the online environment. Revisions to the Digital Citizenship Scale show that this concept has dimensions that can be accounted for empirically, including internet political participation, online social action, and elements of digital ethics. These findings reinforce the argument that

digital citizenship is not sufficiently explained through normative narratives, but also needs to be supported by valid measurement tools (Connolly & Miller, 2022).

In terms of education, Japar et al. emphasized that students view digital citizenship as an ability that is directly related to social media, rights and obligations in cyberspace, and the need to integrate a technology-based learning environment. Meanwhile, Nurjanah et al. show that the critical literacy of young people in the digital era still needs strengthening, especially in the dimension of data-based decision-making and concrete actions for a better life together. These two studies confirm that citizenship education needs to move from knowledge transfer to the formation of critical and participatory competencies (Japar et al., 2024).

Based on this background, the research questions of this article are: how the structure of knowledge about social media and participatory citizenship skills is formed in the literature 2021 and above; what are the most dominant themes in the citation network and concept development; and how the literature directs the research agenda of civic education in the future. The working hypothesis or analytical proposition used is that the latest literature tends to move from a symbolic participation model to a critical skills-based participatory model, and that the most powerful citation network will bring together the study of digital literacy, civic engagement, and digital democracy in a mutually reinforcing conceptual current.

The purpose of this article is to compile a conceptual and thematic map of social media relations and participatory citizenship skills through a bibliometric-qualitative approach. This article aims to show how citation structures shape knowledge centers, how research themes move from measurement to intervention, and how recent literature hints at the need for civic education that is more adaptive to platform culture. With that goal, this article also seeks to provide a theoretical foundation that can be used by future researchers to build a sharper and more targeted analysis model.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach based on document analysis with a bibliometric orientation. This choice is relevant because bibliometrics not only calculate the productivity of publications, but also read citation patterns, theme centers, and the direction of knowledge development. Donthu et al. emphasized that bibliometric analysis is commonly used to map the scientific performance as well as the intellectual structure of certain fields through tools such as Scopus, VOSviewer, and science mapping techniques. Therefore, this article utilizes bibliometric logic as a qualitative reading tool for the literature, not as a substitute for pure statistical analysis (Donthu et al., 2021).

Operationally, the search is focused on literature from 2021 to 2025 which discusses social media, digital citizenship, civic engagement, youth participation, digital literacy, and bibliometric mapping on adjacent topics. The selected articles were read thematically to find conceptual common threads, term repetition patterns, and shifts of focus from technical issues to normative and pedagogical issues. In practice, this approach also allows researchers to capture the difference between research that measures participatory behavior and research that explains the mechanisms of its formation. Firdauz and Sobari gave an example of how science mapping can be used to trace the development of social media topics in political campaigns, so that a similar approach is feasible to read citation networks in the realm of participatory citizenship (Firdauz & Sobari, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The synthesis results show that the structure of knowledge about social media and participatory citizenship skills moves around four large clusters. The first cluster is the conceptual cluster, which links digital rights, digital literacy, and digital citizenship as a theoretical basis. The second cluster is the pedagogical cluster, which places civic education and socio-civic skills development as a medium for forming participation. The third cluster is the participatory-political cluster, which discusses civic engagement, digital activism, and online democracy. The fourth cluster is the methodological cluster, which contains bibliometric analysis, science mapping, and citation network reading. These four clusters show that cutting-edge research no longer stands apart, but rather hitchhikes and forms an increasingly dense trajectory of knowledge (Peart et al., 2022).

One of the most important findings is that digital citizenship measurement is starting to shift from general observations to more specific instrument validation. Connolly and Miller show that the Digital Citizenship Scale instrument can be revised into a more concise model but still valid for a wider population. The theoretical implications are huge, because digital participation research is no longer sufficiently based on subjective perceptions or descriptive narratives. It needs indicators that are able to capture internet political activity, online social actions, and ethical behavior in one consistent framework. Thus, the quality of analysis in this field is greatly influenced by the ability of researchers to choose the right instrument (Connolly & Miller, 2022).

In the realm of education, Peart et al. show that digital and socio-civic skills are closely related to the participation patterns of young people. They place digital skills not as mere technical abilities, but as tools for organizing, collaborating, and navigating public issues consciously. The strength of this study lies in its ability to link demographic factors to participation profiles, so that participation is not understood as a generic trait of the younger generation. Quite the opposite, participation emerges as a result of the interaction between educational experiences, digital access, and civic orientation that are built gradually (Peart et al., 2022).

Educational interventions also received important support from the Magis-Weinberg et al. study of school-based programs in Peru. The study shows that the promotion of digital citizenship can be designed in a structured manner in early adolescence through culturally sensitive curriculum adaptation. The main value of these findings is that digital citizenship is not only a behavioral issue, but also the result of a deliberately constructed pedagogical design. This means that online participation can be directed from an early age if schools instill a frame of mind that emphasizes the use of technology in a healthy, responsible, and reflective manner (Magis-Weinberg et al., 2023).

Tarsidi et al. provide a very important perspective from Indonesia. They found that the use of social media plays a vital role in civic engagement of digital natives, especially since digital platforms help raise awareness of socio-political issues and facilitate dialogue with people with different views. However, the study also confirms the existence of information credibility issues that threaten the quality of participation. Thus, digital participation in Indonesia is ambivalent, as it can strengthen deliberation while opening up space for misconceptions and manipulation of information (Tarsidi et al., 2023).

Oden and Porter's findings reinforce that picture in the adolescent group. They show that the use of platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok is positively correlated with political interests and civic engagement online and offline, although some platforms are also associated with affective polarization. This reading is important because it breaks the assumption that social media only produces negative effects. What is more appropriate is that the effect of social media is highly dependent on the type of platform, usage patterns, and the quality of literacy of its users. Therefore, adolescent participation in the digital space should be read in a more complex spectrum than just good or bad (Oden & Porter, 2023).

In the context of citizenship learning in Indonesia, Japar et al. emphasized that students interpret digital citizenship as part of civic education that is inseparable from social media, rights, and responsibilities in cyberspace. They also show that technology-based learning environments help students develop digital skills that are more relevant to contemporary social life. From this, it can be seen that civic education needs to move in a more contextual direction, namely educating citizens who not only understand state theory, but are also able to act consciously in the digital public space (Japar et al., 2024).

The literature on critical literacy also emphasizes that direction. Nurjanah et al. found that young citizens who are familiar with digital devices still need to be strengthened in making data-based decisions, being communicative and tolerant, and taking concrete actions for a better life together. Here, critical literacy is not just the ability to read information, but the ability to assess, weigh, and connect information with social responsibility. The analytical implication is that healthy civic participation requires citizens who are able to transform information consumption into meaningful public actions (Nurjanah et al., 2024).

The following table summarizes the four main nodes that appear to be most powerful in the network of literature read. This summary shows that this field does not stand on a single theme, but rather on inter-cluster relationships that support each other.

Cluster	Main Focus	Key Findings	Implications
Conceptual	Digital rights, digital literacy, digital citizenship	These concepts are different but intertwined as the foundation of digital citizenship	A firm operational definition is needed so that research does not confuse terms
Pedagogis	Digital dan socio-civic skills	Digital skills are directly related to youth participation profiles	Civic education must integrate literacy and participation
Partisipatif-politik	Civic engagement, digital activism, online democracy	Social media expands the channels of participation, but it also poses a risk of polarization	Quality of participation requires critical literacy and information verification
Metodologis	Bibliometric analysis, science mapping	Literature mapping helps to see the center of the theme and direction of research	Research agendas can be prepared more precisely and evidence-based

At the level of digital politics, Wahyuningroem et al. show that youth political participation in digital movements in Indonesia, including in the case of #ReformasiDikorupsi and #TolakOmnibusLaw, shows strong dynamics but does not always lead to equal policy impacts. This is important because it signifies a gap between digital expression and institutional change. Thus, digital participation should not be measured only by the virality or intensity of the campaign, but also by the ability to turn discourse into real policy pressure (Wahyuningroem et al., 2023).

The Jovanovic and Stankovic studies provide an additional layer to this discussion. They highlight that social media encourages political activism and civic engagement through grassroots mobilization, but at the same time magnifies the risk of misinformation and ideological polarization. These findings reinforce the argument that social media is a democratic space that is both democratic and fragile. Therefore, participatory literacy must include the ability to distinguish substantive activism from mere emotional expressions that are easily provoked by content flows (Jovanovic & Stankovic, 2024).

In the field of bibliometrics, Firdauz and Sobari show that research on social media in political campaigns continues to develop and increasingly uses computational approaches such as machine learning and natural language processing. These findings indicate that this field of study is beginning to shift from phenomena descriptions to big data-driven analysis. However, behind these methodological advances, normative questions about the quality of citizen participation still need to be expanded. Future research needs to connect big data analysis with assessments of civic competencies that underpin digital behavior (Firdauz & Sobari, 2024).

Ali et al.'s study of digital democracy reinforces that conclusion. They reviewed publications from 2019 to 2024 and found themes, methods, and temporal developments that show that digital democracy is now an increasingly established field. However, the maturation of this field actually opens up a new need, namely how citizens build the capacity to participate meaningfully in a digital space full of competitive information. At this point, participatory skills appear as a bridge between digital democracy and everyday civic practice (Ali et al., 2024).

Iskandar et al. show that digital citizenship literacy in Indonesia is greatly influenced by awareness of privacy and social campaigns. These findings are interesting because they show that digital citizenship literacy is not only related to technical skills, but also to awareness of the limits of data use, identity security, and sharing ethics. This means that citizens' participation in social media must be understood along with awareness of digital rights, because without that awareness participation can easily turn into self-exposure that is susceptible to manipulation (Iskandar et al., 2025).

He and Li reminded that digital literacy citizenship research is moving in three major directions, namely digital citizenship competence, digital literacy education, and digital mental-emotional health. They also emphasized three main challenges, namely digital ethics and security, the digital divide, and digital education inequality. In reading this article, the findings show that civic participation cannot be separated from the psychosocial condition of users. Social media not only shapes opinions, but also influences citizens' emotional readiness to dialogue, disagree, and participate in public action (He & Li, 2025).

Hilhamsyah et al. also showed the growth of research on digital literacy in quality education. Their mapping from 2000 to 2024 shows that digital literacy has become a central theme in quality education. In the context of this article, the findings are important because they confirm that the formation of participatory citizenship skills is inseparable from the quality of education in general. If schools fail to build digital literacy, then the space for participation in social media will be more easily filled by disinformation than by healthy deliberation (Hilhamsyah et al., 2025).

At the electoral political level, Suhariyanto and Rozak found that political participation, civic education, and social media both have a significant influence on the political engagement of Gen Z in Indonesia. These results are important because they show the synergy between formal citizenship education and digital communication practices. This means that social media can indeed strengthen the political involvement of the younger generation, but the effect will be stronger when civic education provides an adequate framework of thinking. Thus, digital participation grows best when it is supported by education, not just by platform algorithms (Suhariyanto & Rozak, 2025).

Widjaya and Wono also show that social media influences the participation of novice voters in digital democracy. Their study on voters first highlighted that digital platforms serve as a space for preference formation, political information, and participation orientation. However, a critical reading of this study shows that novice voter participation easily turns into reactive participation if it is not balanced with the ability to sort political information. This is where participatory citizenship skills become the determinant of whether social media is just a channel for political entertainment or turns into an arena for learning democracy (Widjaya & Wono, 2025).

Nugroho showcased another side of digital activism and youth participation in Indonesia. His research shows that social media plays a role in building collective identity, social mobilization, and pressure on political accountability. However, he also emphasized that digital activism does not always result in linear policy changes. This means that there is a gap between digital expression and institutional transformation. This reading supports the argument that participatory skills should include advocacy strategies, an understanding of the political context, and the ability to design sustainable actions, not just momentary campaigns (Nugroho, 2025).

Polizzi provides a conceptual sharpening that is very useful for this discussion. He showed that functional and critical digital literacy can be used simultaneously to make strategic decisions about when citizens need to engage and when they need to exercise restraint. This idea is important because it expands the notion of participation from mere active activity to reflective decisions that take into account context, risk, and public value. For the study of social media and participatory citizenship skills, this perspective marks a shift towards more conscious, measurable, and responsible participation (Polizzi, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This article concludes that social media is not just a communication space, but also an arena for the formation of digital citizenship and public participation. However, the quality of participation is not determined by the intensity of online activities alone, but by digital literacy capacity, critical thinking skills, ethical understanding, and emotional readiness of citizens in responding to public issues. Literature review shows that digital participation is strongest when it is supported by civic education, digital-literacy-sensitive policies, and a healthy culture of platform use. Conversely, if those three elements don't meet, social media tends to only result in crowded but fragile participation. Therefore, the development of participatory citizenship skills needs to be positioned as a systemic agenda, not just a technical response to technological developments.

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