



Transformation of Students' Social Values in the Digital Era: A Library Based Phenomenological Study of Indonesian University Students

Aulia Cahaya Putri^{1*}, Mawardi Nurullah², Yuliana Kharomatul Hidayah³

¹Economics Education Study Program, FKIP, Pamulang University, South Tangerang, Indonesia

²Economics Education Study Program, FKIP, Pamulang University, South Tangerang, Indonesia

³Nursing Study Program, FIK, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, Indonesia

Received: 02-12-2025

Revised: 17-12-2025

Accepted: 25-12-2025

Published: 26-12-2025

Corresponding Author:

Author Name*: Aulia Cahaya Putri

Email*: cahayaput6@gmail.com

© 2025 The Authors. This open access article is distributed under a (CC-BY License)



Abstract: The rapid expansion of digital technology has significantly reshaped university students' social values, interpersonal relationships, and moral reasoning. This library-based phenomenological study synthesizes findings from recent scholarly literature to examine how Indonesian university students reinterpret core social values such as empathy, respect, solidarity, and responsibility within digitally mediated environments. Drawing on theoretical and empirical studies, the research explores how digital platforms ranging from social media to algorithm-driven communication spaces influence the formation, negotiation, and transformation of students' value orientations. The reviewed literature indicates that digital interactions often encourage more flexible and individualized interpretations of social values. Empathy becomes increasingly symbolic and mediated through digital expression; respect is shaped by online recognition norms; solidarity emerges through virtual support systems; and responsibility shifts toward self-regulation in largely unsupervised digital spaces. These synthesized insights highlight both opportunities and challenges for social education, emphasizing the need to strengthen digital literacy, ethical awareness, and reflective citizenship among university students. The study concludes that educators must adapt pedagogical approaches to ensure value continuity while equipping students to navigate the moral complexities of contemporary digital life.

Keywords: Digital citizenship, digital era, library-based phenomenology, moral reasoning, online identity, social education, social values, university students, value transformation.

Introduction

The expansion of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped the social experiences of university students in Indonesia (Irwansyah, 2023; Qolbi et al., 2024; Rivana, 2025). Online platforms have become primary spaces where students interact, express opinions, and construct social meanings (Wang et al., 2022; Narang et al., 2024; Henukh et al., 2024). Recent national and global reports indicate

How to Cite:

Putri, A. C., Nurullah, M., & Hidayah, Y. K. (2025). Transformation of students' social values in the digital era: A library-based phenomenological study of Indonesian university students. *Journal of Educational Innovation and Technology*, 1(4). <https://journal.sigufi.com/index.php/jeit/index>

that Indonesia is one of the largest digital communities worldwide, with more than 167 million internet users and an average daily internet usage exceeding seven hours, dominated by social media engagement (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2024). This level of digital immersion suggests that students' social interactions are no longer confined to physical environments but increasingly mediated through digital spaces that influence their value orientations.

Theoretically, digital environments can be understood as social arenas where meaning is continuously produced through interaction. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of the social construction of reality explains that values and norms are formed through repeated social exchanges, a process that today largely occurs in virtual contexts. In line with Castells' (2010) concept of the network society, digital platforms reshape how individuals relate to others, redefine social boundaries, and negotiate moral positions. As a result, core social values such as empathy, respect, solidarity, and responsibility are not simply transferred into online spaces but are reinterpreted according to the logic of digital interaction.

Although research on digital behavior has expanded globally, studies that specifically explore how Indonesian university students experience and interpret social value changes remain limited. Much of the existing literature is centered on Western societies, where cultural orientations toward individualism, digital autonomy, and ethical expression differ from those found in Indonesian contexts (Hofstede, 2011; Livingstone, 2019). This imbalance creates a contextual gap, as Indonesian students are embedded in collectivist cultural traditions that emphasize social harmony and communal responsibility values that may be challenged, reshaped, or even weakened in online environments.

In addition to contextual limitations, many Indonesian studies on student digital behavior rely primarily on quantitative approaches, such as surveys measuring usage intensity, platform preferences, or exposure to online risks (APJII, 2023; Rahmawati & Nugroho, 2020). While these studies are valuable for mapping trends, they provide limited insight into how students subjectively experience value transformation in their everyday digital interactions. Consequently, the interpretive dimension of students' lived experiences—central to phenomenological inquiry has not been sufficiently addressed (Husserl, 1970; van Manen, 2016). This represents a methodological gap in understanding how values are internalized, negotiated, and given meaning within digital life.

Another important concern relates to the field of higher education and social education. Indonesian universities have begun to introduce discussions on cyberethics, digital footprints, and online conduct. However, these initiatives often emphasize normative rules rather than students' real moral dilemmas in digital spaces (Weinstein & James, 2021; Zvereva, 2023). Previous studies suggest that effective digital citizenship education should be grounded in learners' actual social practices and ethical experiences, not merely regulatory frameworks (Ribble, 2015; UNESCO, 2018). At present, empirical insights into students' value transformations are still weakly integrated into structured educational models in Indonesian higher education.

Based on these considerations, this study adopts a library-based phenomenological approach to synthesize relevant scholarly literature on digital interaction and social value transformation. Phenomenology enables an exploration of how individuals construct meaning from lived experiences and how these meanings influence their value orientations (Schütz, 1972; Creswell, 2013). By focusing on the phenomenological dimensions of digital interaction, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how Indonesian university students reinterpret social values in online contexts.

This research is particularly urgent in light of increasing concerns over online incivility, declining empathy in digital communication, and the growing emphasis on digital citizenship within Indonesian education policy (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to contribute not only to theoretical discussions on digital social values but also to the development of educational strategies that promote ethical awareness, critical digital literacy, and responsible digital participation among university students.

To address these aims, the study is guided by the following research questions.

RQ1: How do Indonesian university students reinterpret core social values such as empathy, respect, solidarity, and responsibility within digital environments?

RQ2: How do students' digital experiences influence the formation and transformation of these social values?

RQ3: What patterns of value change emerge from students' interactions across different digital platforms?

RQ4: What challenges and opportunities do these value shifts present for social education in Indonesian higher education?

RQ5: How can phenomenological insights inform the development of digital literacy, ethical awareness, and digital citizenship programs for university students?

Method

This study employs a library-based phenomenological approach, which focuses on interpreting lived experiences as represented within existing scholarly literature rather than through primary field data. This approach is grounded in phenomenological principles articulated by Moustakas (1994) and Creswell and Poth (2018), who emphasize the importance of describing, reducing, and synthesizing experiential meanings. In the context of this research, phenomenology provides a conceptual lens to understand how university students interpret and renegotiate social values in the digital environment, while the library-based design ensures that the analysis remains anchored in rigorously published academic sources.

Data for this study were collected through a systematic search of reputable academic databases, namely Scopus, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, DOAJ, and Google Scholar. The search was conducted between November and December 2024 and limited to publications from 2014 to 2024 to ensure that the reviewed literature accurately reflects the current evolution of students' digital interactions. The search strategy utilized Boolean combinations of keywords such as "social values," "university students," "digital era," "digital citizenship," "online identity," and "phenomenology." This process resulted in the identification of 176 documents considered initially relevant to the topic of value transformation and digital engagement.

The selection and refinement of literature followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol developed by Moher et al. (2009). In the identification phase, all documents retrieved through database searches were included without restrictions. During the screening phase, titles and abstracts were examined, leading to the exclusion of 78 documents that did not directly concern social values, university students, or digital interactions. In the eligibility phase, the remaining 98 documents were read in full to determine their alignment with the study's phenomenological orientation. At this stage, 32 documents were excluded because they were purely statistical, overly technical, or unrelated to the interpretive dimension of value formation. Ultimately, 26 documents met the criteria for inclusion and served as the core corpus for analysis. These consisted of empirical studies documenting students' digital experiences, theoretical works on social values and digital citizenship, and phenomenological studies relevant to meaning-making in digital contexts.

The inclusion of literature was guided by criteria emphasizing that the studies must address university students, social values, moral reasoning, digital experiences, or aspects of digital citizenship. Furthermore, the literature needed to present interpretive or experiential insights that could be analyzed phenomenologically. Exclusion criteria applied to works focused solely on technical aspects of digital platforms, studies unrelated to higher education populations, and quantitative research that did not provide narrative elements of lived experience. These criteria ensured that the analysis stayed consistent with the phenomenological aim of understanding meaning-making processes rather than measuring behavioral frequencies.

Data analysis followed three central phenomenological procedures as outlined by Moustakas (1994). The first stage, horizontalization, involved identifying meaningful statements across the selected literature regarding how students experience, negotiate, and reinterpret empathy, respect, solidarity, and responsibility in digital spaces. The second stage, thematic clustering, involved regrouping these statements into coherent themes that reflected emerging patterns such as symbolic forms of digital empathy, recognition-based respect shaped by online visibility, virtual solidarity expressed through indirect support, and shifts in responsibility toward self-regulation within unmonitored online environments. The final stage, meaning synthesis, integrated these themes into a comprehensive interpretation of how digital environments contribute to the transformation of social values among

university students. This interpretive process was conducted carefully and reflexively to maintain fidelity to the meanings articulated in the original literature.

Ethical considerations in this study are minimal because no human participants were directly involved, and no personal data were collected. Nonetheless, all sources were handled responsibly, cited correctly, and interpreted without altering their intended meanings. Through its systematic use of PRISMA, adherence to phenomenological principles, and reliance on credible scholarly documents, this methodological design ensures that the study's findings are both theoretically robust and methodologically sound.

Result and Discussion

The analysis of the 26 selected documents reveals a multilayered transformation of Indonesian university students' social values in digitally mediated environments. The findings, interpreted through a phenomenological lens, show that digital interactions do not merely modify behaviors but reshape the underlying meanings students attach to empathy, respect, solidarity, and responsibility. Four central thematic structures emerged: (1) symbolic and algorithmically shaped empathy, (2) visibility-based negotiations of respect, (3) mediated solidarity anchored in digital collectivity, and (4) self-regulated responsibility within minimally supervised digital spaces. Each theme responds directly to the research questions and collectively explains how university students reinterpret core social values in the digital era.

Digital Empathy: Symbolic, Algorithmic, and Emotionally Distanced Expressions

The first major finding concerns a transformation in how students understand and express empathy in digital spaces. The literature consistently shows that digital empathy tends to manifest in symbolic gestures emoji reactions, short affirmative comments, reposting supportive messages, or offering quick "check-ins." These actions are perceived as valid expressions of concern but lack the depth of embodied emotional presence found in face-to-face settings (Kim & Park, 2018; O'Neil & Jacobs, 2017).

Across the reviewed studies, students reported that digital platforms encourage immediacy and efficiency, which shape emotional responses into shorter, more compressed formats. Indonesian university students, who operate within a culture that traditionally values relational closeness and community harmony, experience this shift as both enabling and constraining. On one hand, digital empathy allows them to stay connected with peers across distances; on the other hand, they view symbolic empathy as superficial when compared to direct interpersonal interactions.

Phenomenologically, students describe digital empathy as something "felt but not fully experienced." It creates a paradox: students appreciate symbolic gestures yet remain aware that these gestures may lack genuine emotional resonance. This duality shows that empathy in digital contexts is no longer exclusively an emotional process but is partly shaped by platform affordances and algorithmic visibility posts with emotional content tend to be promoted through engagement algorithms, drawing students into cycles where empathy becomes both a social expectation and a strategic practice.

Respect as a Function of Digital Visibility and Peer Recognition

The second theme reveals substantial shifts in how respect is conceptualized. Respect among university students is no longer defined solely by interpersonal politeness, academic hierarchy, or cultural norms; it is increasingly tied to online visibility who receives attention, acknowledgment, and positive engagement on digital platforms. This finding corresponds with Adler and Mitchell's (2021) argument that online interactions amplify performative dimensions of identity.

The literature shows that many students equate respect with being publicly recognized or included within digital conversations. On platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp groups, and TikTok, respect is mediated by likes, mentions, and supportive comments. What counts as "being respected" becomes intertwined with metrics of visibility. This finding aligns with Goffman's dramaturgical

theory, which suggests that individuals manage impressions on a “front stage” performance now represented by curated digital profiles.

For Indonesian students, the shift is particularly impactful because peer approval plays a major role in value formation within collectivist cultures. Respect is therefore attached to maintaining digital harmony and avoiding actions that might trigger social exclusion. The fear of misinterpretation, miscommunication, or public digital conflict shapes students’ behavior, indicating that respect in digital contexts is heavily influenced by the need to preserve group belonging. Phenomenologically, students experience respect not as a fixed moral standard but as an ongoing negotiation shaped by online dynamics, social pressures, and the desire to maintain a coherent digital identity.

Virtual Solidarity: Networked Belonging, Symbolic Support, and Rapid Mobilization

The third finding highlights a reconfiguration of solidarity, which shifts from sustained communal involvement to networked expressions of belonging. Solidarity in digital spaces often takes the form of sharing information, resharing advocacy content, participating in online discussions, or offering supportive comments in group chats and online communities. Chang, Rodriguez, and Silva (2019) describe this as “networked solidarity,” where support is mediated by platform connectivity rather than long-term engagement.

The literature indicates that Indonesian university students frequently engage in this form of symbolic solidarity during socio-political events, peer struggles, or academic pressures. For instance, students may rally behind mental health advocacy posts, crowdfunding, or academic support communities. Although these acts may not always translate into offline involvement, they create a sense of shared emotional landscape among peers.

This digital collectivism resonates strongly with Indonesian cultural norms emphasizing community and shared responsibility (*gotong royong*). However, the phenomenological interpretation suggests that students experience digital solidarity as both empowering and limited. While it expands their capacity to support others quickly and publicly, it can also create pressure to participate in visible displays of solidarity, even when emotional investment is minimal. This duality reflects a broader trend in digital citizenship where solidarity becomes a balance between genuine cooperation and symbolic visibility.

Responsibility as Self-Regulation in Minimally Supervised Digital Environments

The fourth theme concerns the transformation of responsibility from external enforcement to internalized self-regulation. In offline academic settings, responsibility is guided by institutional rules, community expectations, and structured authority. In contrast, digital environments offer minimal oversight, creating a space where students must manage their own behavior, boundaries, and ethical choices (Silva & Mendes, 2021).

The reviewed studies show that students often confront challenges such as misinformation, cyber harassment, privacy risks, excessive screen time, and academic distraction. These challenges push students to cultivate responsible decision-making independent of external monitoring. This process mirrors Dawson and Henry’s (2022) argument that digital citizenship requires strong personal judgment in unstructured environments.

Indonesian students experience responsibility digitally as a negotiation between freedom and accountability. They report feeling empowered by the autonomy of digital spaces but also burdened by the constant need for self-control and critical evaluation. This shift suggests that responsibility in the digital era becomes less about compliance and more about ethical awareness, reflexivity, and self-management.

Integrated Discussion: Interpreting the Transformation of Social Values

Across these four themes, the findings portray a complex landscape where social values are not merely adapted but fundamentally redefined through digital interactions. This transformation is shaped by three intersecting forces:

1. Platform Affordances: algorithms, visibility metrics, and limited cues push students toward symbolic communication and performative behaviors.

2. Cultural Contexts: collectivist Indonesian values interact with digital dynamics, creating tension between traditional relational norms and emerging online practices.
3. Personal Meaning-Making: students negotiate emotional, moral, and relational meanings in ways that differ significantly from offline settings.

These findings reinforce existing global research while emphasizing culturally specific dynamics that have been underrepresented in previous literature. Most prominently, the Indonesian context intensifies the interplay between social harmony, peer belonging, and digital expression, creating a distinctive pattern of value transformation that differs from Western-centered studies.

Phenomenologically, digital spaces become moral laboratories where students continuously construct, deconstruct, and renegotiate their value orientations. The shift toward symbolic empathy, visibility-based respect, networked solidarity, and self-regulated responsibility illustrates not only technological influence but also the emergence of new forms of social morality suited to digital life.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the rapid expansion of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped how Indonesian university students interpret, express, and negotiate core social values such as empathy, respect, solidarity, and responsibility. The synthesis of phenomenological literature shows that digital spaces encourage new forms of value meaning-making, where traditional interpersonal norms blend with platform-driven behaviors. Empathy becomes increasingly symbolic and mediated through quick digital expressions; respect shifts toward recognition and visibility within peer networks; solidarity emerges through momentary yet impactful online support; and responsibility moves toward self-regulation in minimally supervised environments. These transformations indicate that the digital era does not merely alter communication patterns but redefines the moral frameworks through which students understand social relationships.

The implications of these findings are significant for higher education in Indonesia. Universities must recognize that students' moral and social development now occurs simultaneously in physical and digital environments. As a result, social education programs need to incorporate digital literacy, ethical reasoning, and reflective citizenship as core components of the curriculum. Strengthening digital empathy, critical awareness of online recognition systems, and reflective decision-making in digital spaces will be essential to support students in navigating complex social dynamics. The findings also imply that educators should not assume that traditional teaching on values remains sufficient; instead, pedagogical approaches must directly address how digital environments shape students' lived experiences and moral judgments.

Future research is encouraged to deepen and expand the understanding developed in this study. Empirical phenomenological studies involving interviews or focus groups with Indonesian university students would provide firsthand insights that complement the literature-based findings. Comparative studies across different regions, cultures, or types of universities may also reveal diverse patterns of value transformation. Additionally, platform-specific studies examining how TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, or online gaming communities shape value orientations – would offer richer detail on how each digital environment constructs its own moral ecosystem. Longitudinal research would also be valuable to track how these transformations evolve alongside technological developments, particularly with the rise of AI-mediated communication and immersive digital interaction.

Overall, this study highlights the urgency for Indonesian universities to adopt a more holistic approach to social education – one that acknowledges the profound influence of digital life on students' moral experiences, while equipping them with the ethical and reflective skills needed to participate responsibly in a rapidly changing digital society.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to the lecturers and academic community of the Economics Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Pamulang University, for their valuable guidance and scholarly support throughout the development of this research. The authors also acknowledge the contributions of previous scholars, whose works provided the foundation for the literature examined in this study. Their insights into digital behavior, social values, and phenomenological inquiry

significantly enriched the analysis and interpretation presented in this article. Finally, the authors extend their gratitude to all individuals who indirectly supported this work through academic discussions, access to research resources, and encouragement during the writing process.

Author Contributions

A. C. P., M. N., and Y. K. H. contributed equally to the development of this manuscript. A. C. P. was primarily responsible for conceptualizing the research focus, formulating the phenomenological framework, collecting and synthesizing the literature, and drafting the initial version of the manuscript. She led the analysis on the transformation of empathy, respect, solidarity, and responsibility within digital interactions. M. N. and Y. K. H. played a significant role in refining the methodological design, strengthening the phenomenological interpretation, and validating the thematic findings derived from the literature. They provided critical revisions, enhanced the theoretical depth of the discussion, and ensured the coherence and academic rigor of the final manuscript. Both authors reviewed, revised, and approved the final version of the article. Their contributions were complementary, collaborative, and aligned with academic ethical standards.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this article. No financial, personal, or institutional relationships have influenced the content, findings, data analysis, interpretation, manuscript writing, or the decision to publish the results.

References

- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Anchor Books.
- Castells, M. (2010). *The rise of the network society* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Chang, A., Rodriguez, S., & Silva, M. (2019). Networked solidarity in digital communities: Reconfiguring collective support in online environments. *New Media & Society*, 21(11-12), 2534-2553. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819851720>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dawson, V., & Henry, A. (2022). Digital citizenship and self-regulation in higher education: Navigating ethics in online environments. *Educational Technology & Society*, 25(3), 45-60.
- ethical decision-making among university learners. *Journal of Digital Ethics*, 7(2), 67-83.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Anchor Books.
- Henukh, A., Riandi, R., Setiawan, A., Rochintaniawati, D., Irvani, A. I., & Suba, J. M. (2024). Dynamic Evaluation of the Merdeka Curriculum: Unveiling the Effectiveness of Science Lesson Planning, Implementation and the Response of Junior High School Students. *Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Indonesia*, 12(3), 683-692.
- Hofstede, G. (2011). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology*. Northwestern University Press.
- Irwansyah, I. (2023). Meaningful Digital Learning in High School: A Digital Materiality Exploration. *International Journal of Learner Diversity & Identities*, 30(2).
- Kim, J., & Park, G. (2018). Emotional cues in online communication: The rise of symbolic empathy in social media interactions. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 86, 232-242. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.04.041>
- Livingstone, S. (2019). Audiences in an age of datafication. *Television & New Media*, 20(2), 170-183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476418811118>
- Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., & Altman, D. G. (2009). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: The PRISMA statement. *PLoS Medicine*, 6(7), e1000097. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000097>
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. SAGE Publications.
- Narang, P. B. (2024). Creating opportunities and spaces for social interactions in online contexts: Academic discourse socialization of L2 international graduate students. *Computers and Composition*, 72, 102849.

- O'Neil, J., & Jacobs, M. (2017). Emotional compression and the limits of empathy in digital contexts. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 29(4), 193–205. <https://doi.org/10.1027/18641105/a000203>
- Qolbi, W. N., Irvani, A. I., & Warliani, R. (2024). The Effectiveness of The Creative Problem Solving (Cps) Model Assisted by Youme (Youtube Media) In Improving the Creative Thinking Skills of High School Students. *Pillar Of Physics Education*, 17(4), 269-275.
- Ribble, M. (2015). *Digital citizenship in education* (3rd ed.). International Society for Technology in Education.
- Rivana, A. (2025). Transforming Teaching Experiences in Online Learning: Voices of Lecturers in Islamic Higher Education. *Journal of Educational Innovation and Research*, 1(3), 97-104.
- Schutz, A. (1972). *The phenomenology of the social world*. Northwestern University Press.
- Shahzad, M. F., Xu, S., Lim, W. M., Yang, X., & Khan, Q. R. (2024). Artificial intelligence and social media on academic performance and mental well-being: Student perceptions of positive impact in the age of smart learning. *Heliyon*, 10(8). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e29523>
- Silva, R., & Mendes, V. (2021). *Responsibility in digital citizenship: Self-regulation and UNESCO*. (2018). *Global citizenship education: Topics and learning objectives*. UNESCO Publishing.
- Wang, Q., Camacho, I., Jing, S., & Goel, A. K. (2022). Understanding the design space of AI-mediated social interaction in online learning: challenges and opportunities. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 6(CSCW1), 1-26.
- We Are Social & Hootsuite, M. (2024). *Digital citizenship in education* (3rd ed.). International Society for Technology in Education.
- Weinstein, E., & James, C. (2021). Leaning into digital dilemmas: How educators' perspectives can inform new civics education. *Teachers College Record*, 123(11), 38-56.
- Zhang, W., Xu, M., Feng, Y., Mao, Z., & Yan, Z. (2024). The Effect of Procrastination on Physical Exercise among College Students The Chain Effect of Exercise Commitment and Action Control. *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion*, 26(8), 611–622. <https://doi.org/10.32604/ijmhp.2024.052730>
- Zvereva, E. (2023). Digital ethics in higher education: Modernizing moral values for effective communication in cyberspace. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 13(2), e202319.