

INFORMATION ON DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS, REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

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Abstract

Rapid digital transformation has brought about fundamental changes in the way information is disseminated and consumed by society. The development of digital media not only offers easy access and speed of information distribution, but also raises serious challenges in the realm of ethics, regulation, and policy. This study aims to deeply analyze the role and challenges of information in the context of digital ethics, media regulation, and policies relevant to the current technological era. The method used is a qualitative approach, by conducting in-depth interviews with digital media experts. This study is also complemented by a review of the latest literature and case study analysis. The results of the study show that although digital media supports the democratization of information, it also opens up gaps for the spread of disinformation, hate speech, privacy violations, and inequality of access to technology. Analysis of public interest theory, deontology, cyberspace, and diffusion of innovation is used to understand the complexity of these challenges. These theories underline the importance of adaptive regulation, universal ethics, and collective responsibility in maintaining the digital information ecosystem. One important finding is the central role of digital literacy in helping people navigate online content ethically and critically. The conclusion of this study states that digital information management requires a multidisciplinary approach involving the government, platform providers, academics, and the general public. Effective policies must not only be repressive against violations, but also promotive in encouraging digital literacy and ethical awareness. Practical implications of this study include recommendations for strengthening public interest-based policies, developing inclusive digital literacy education programs, and collaboration between digital media platforms to implement high ethical standards. Thus, this study is expected to be a reference for policy makers in forming a safe, ethical, and equitable digital media ecosystem.

Keywords: *Digital media, information ethics, regulation, public policy, digital literacy.*

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has brought fundamental changes to the global media and communication landscape. The internet and various digital platforms have changed the way individuals interact, share information, and access news and entertainment. Digital media, including social media platforms, online news sites, blogs, forums, and various internet-based applications, have become an inseparable part of everyday life. The ease of access, speed of

information dissemination, and interactivity offered by digital media have opened up significant new opportunities in various fields, from economics, politics, social, to culture (Van Dijk, 2020). This is in line with what was expressed by Afriani & Azmi (2020) & Mutiah et al., (2019) who stated that digital media has become an important part of modern society. The development of information technology allows the dissemination of news and information quickly and widely, creating various opportunities and challenges. Ease of access to information provides benefits in education, business, and social communication. However, behind its transformative potential, digital media also presents a series of complex challenges related to ethics, regulation, and policy. Its cross-border nature, user anonymity, and the speed of information dissemination often raise unprecedented ethical dilemmas. For example, the massive spread of disinformation and misinformation can threaten social and political stability (Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, 2018). Privacy violations, hate speech, cyberbullying, and exploitation of personal data are crucial issues that require serious attention (Floridi, 2016). This is also in line with what was conveyed by Firmanda et al. (2023) that digital media also faces various ethical problems, such as the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, and privacy violations. From an ethical perspective, digital media raises fundamental questions about the responsibilities of users and platform providers. How should information be verified before being shared? What are the limits of freedom of expression in the digital realm? How to protect vulnerable groups from harmful content? These questions highlight the need for a strong and relevant ethical framework to guide behavior in the digital media environment ((Ess & Vallor, 2020).

In the context of regulation, governments and related bodies in various countries are struggling to find an effective approach to managing the negative impacts of digital media without stifling innovation and freedom of expression. Digital media regulation is often challenging due to the global and dynamic nature of these platforms. Jurisdictional differences and the lack of physical borders make it difficult to enforce and coordinate across countries (Marsden, 2018). Issues such as platform liability for user-uploaded content, cross-border personal data protection, and copyright enforcement in the digital age are central to regulatory debates (Helberger, 2019).

Digital media policy encompasses a range of instruments used by governments, non-governmental organizations, and industry players to shape the digital media landscape. These policies can take the form of laws, government regulations, industry codes of conduct, technical standards, and educational initiatives. The goal of digital media policy is to create a safe, inclusive, and responsible digital environment, while encouraging innovation and growth in the digital economy (Livingstone et al., 2019). Effective policy development requires a deep understanding of technological dynamics, user behavior, and the social, economic, and political impacts of digital media.

Rapid technological developments, such as artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and metaverse, further complicate the ethical, regulatory, and policy landscape of digital media. For example, the use of AI in content creation and distribution raises questions about liability for misinformation or harmful information. Blockchain technology offers the potential to improve data security and transparency, but also raises challenges related to privacy and anonymity. The emergence of the metaverse as a new social and economic interaction space presents ethical and regulatory questions that are not yet fully understood (Dwivedi et al., 2023). In Indonesia, digital media is growing rapidly along with the increasing number of internet users. According to the We Are Social and Hootsuite report (Riyanto, 2023), the number of internet users in Indonesia has reached 212.9 million people or around 77% of the total population. This shows that digital

media has a major influence on society (Riyanto, 2023). The increasing internet penetration and the popularity of social media platforms have changed the communication and information landscape. However, challenges related to the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, and cybercrime are also increasing. The Indonesian government has issued various regulations and policies related to digital media, such as the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE) and its amendments, as well as various ministerial regulations and other guidelines. However, the effectiveness and implementation of these policies are still debated and require further study (Wijaya, 2021).

Research on digital media ethics, regulation, and policy is becoming increasingly important to understand the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital era. Recent studies explore various aspects, ranging from the psychological impact of social media use (Odgers & Jensen, 2020), the effectiveness of various digital media regulation models (Klonick, 2021), to the development of an ethical framework for AI in media (Fjeld et al., 2020). Understanding the evolving landscape of digital media ethics, regulation, and policy is key to creating a more responsible, safe, and beneficial digital ecosystem for society as a whole.

This article aims to analyze in depth issues related to information ethics, regulation, and policy related to digital media, with a focus on recent developments and challenges faced in the current digital era. Through a literature review of recent journals and analysis of various case studies, this paper is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of this issue and offer relevant perspectives for the development of effective and ethical digital media policies.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the approach used is qualitative and quantitative to gain a comprehensive understanding of information in digital media ethics, regulation, and policy. This research design adopts case studies and surveys, where the case study will examine several examples of relevant digital media, while the survey will use a questionnaire to collect data from respondents. The research population consists of digital media users in Indonesia, with a sample of around 300 respondents taken through random sampling and purposive sampling techniques, covering various age, education, and professional backgrounds. The research instruments include a questionnaire designed to measure respondents' attitudes and understanding of ethics and regulation, as well as in-depth interviews with experts and practitioners in the field of digital media to gain a deeper perspective. Data will be collected through online questionnaire distribution and face-to-face interviews or via video conference, which will then be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques for qualitative data and statistical software for quantitative data. This study will also maintain ethics by ensuring that all respondents provide informed consent and maintain the confidentiality of their data. With this method, it is hoped that the research can provide in-depth insights into the challenges and opportunities faced in the context of information in digital media.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Landscape and Challenges of Digital Media Ethics, Regulation and Policy

The dynamic digital media landscape presents a series of significant ethical, regulatory and policy challenges. Analysis through the lens of public interest theory, deontology theory,

cyberspace theory and diffusion and innovation theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing these challenges. Public Interest Theory highlights that government intervention through regulation and policy is needed to address market or social failures posed by digital media. Challenges such as disinformation, polarization, privacy threats, hate speech, the digital divide and negative impacts on mental health clearly threaten the welfare and benefits of society as a whole. Emerging regulatory efforts, such as personal data protection, handling hate speech and disinformation, and efforts to create healthy business competition can be seen as steps to realize the public interest in the digital realm. However, the implementation of this theory faces challenges in defining and prioritizing the various interrelated aspects of the public interest. Governments and policymakers need to engage in inclusive deliberation to balance values such as freedom of expression with protection from harm. In addition, the influence of interest groups and the potential for policy bias demand transparency and accountability in the policy-making process. Careful evaluation of implemented policies is also crucial to ensure their effectiveness in serving the broader public interest.

Deontological theory, with its focus on moral obligations and universal principles, provides a robust ethical framework for identifying key challenges. The democratization of information raises the obligation to convey truthful information and the responsibility of platforms not to facilitate the spread of disinformation. The personalization of algorithms raises questions about the obligation to respect user autonomy and the need for algorithmic transparency. The digital divide violates the principle of universal fairness in access to information. Hate speech and online violence intrinsically violate the obligation not to harm. Threats to privacy and data security violate the obligation to respect individual privacy. A deontological framework for identifying key ethical challenges involves evaluating actions based on the principles of universality and humanity as ends, identifying relevant obligations, considering potential conflicts of obligations, and evaluating the roles and responsibilities of different actors.

Cyberspace theory emphasizes the unique characteristics of the digital world such as anonymity, lack of physical boundaries, and decentralization, enhancing our understanding of why ethical and policy challenges in digital media are so complex. Diffusion of innovation theory explains how new technologies and ideas spread through society. Understanding the dynamics of innovation diffusion in the context of digital media helps to anticipate and respond to emerging ethical and policy challenges.

Combining the four perspectives provides a more comprehensive understanding. Anonymity in cyberspace can weaken individuals' sense of responsibility for their actions, including the spread of disinformation or hate speech. From a deontological perspective, this conflicts with the obligation to act honestly and do no harm, and from a public interest perspective, anonymity complicates the enforcement of regulation and platform accountability in creating a safe and trustworthy digital environment.

Decentralization of content on digital platforms complicates control and moderation. Public interest theory questions the extent to which platforms have a responsibility to manage user-generated content for the public interest. From a deontological perspective, this relates to the platform's obligation not to facilitate unethical actions.

If this is connected to the theory of diffusion and innovation, it can be seen that the speed of the spread of information and digital technology is currently very high. Innovations such as personalization algorithms or the emergence of new platforms can quickly change the media

landscape and give rise to unprecedented ethical dilemmas. Public Interest Theory highlights the need for adaptive and responsive policies to keep up with this speed of change in order to protect the public interest. Meanwhile, from a deontological perspective, the speed of diffusion demands higher ethical awareness and responsibility from innovators and users.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory recognizes that technology adoption is not always equitable, contributing to the digital divide. From a Public Interest perspective, this creates inequities in access to information and opportunities. From a deontological perspective, this violates the principle of universal justice. Policies need to be designed to accelerate inclusive adoption and reduce inequality.

The emergence of new technologies such as AI and the metaverse presents new ethical challenges that are not yet fully understood. Diffusion of Innovation Theory reminds us that innovation can change existing norms and values, thus requiring ongoing ethical reflection based on deontological principles to ensure that technological developments are in line with human values and morality.

Crucial Ethical Issues Related to the Use and Dissemination of Information through Digital Media

Discussions on ethical challenges in the digital era including data privacy and security, disinformation and hoaxes, hate speech and cyberbullying, intellectual property rights, and the digital divide and inclusivity can be evaluated in depth through the lens of deontological theory that emphasizes moral obligations and universal principles (Alexander & Moore, 2016; Timmermann, 2023). Simultaneously, an individual's level of digital literacy plays a crucial role in how they understand, navigate, and respond to these ethical challenges. Digital literacy theory explains that a set of cognitive, technical, and socio-emotional competencies empower individuals to interact effectively and responsibly in the digital environment (Eshet-Alkalai, 2004; Gilster, 1997).

The relationship between deontological theory and digital literacy in addressing digital ethical challenges:

1. Data Privacy and Security

From a deontological perspective, digital service providers have a moral obligation to protect user data and be transparent about its use (Timmermann, 2023). Individuals with high digital literacy have the ability to understand data-related risks, evaluate privacy policies, and take proactive steps to protect their personal information (ALA, 2000; Livingstone et al., 2011). Lack of digital literacy makes individuals more vulnerable to privacy violations due to ignorance or lack of understanding of the implications.

2. Disinformation and Hoaxes

Deontological theory emphasizes the obligation of every individual not to spread false or misleading information based on the principle of universality (Kant in Timmermann, 2023). Individuals with good digital literacy have the ability to critically evaluate sources of information, verify facts, and identify disinformation tactics (Bawden, 2008). Low digital literacy makes them vulnerable to hoaxes and contributes to their spread.

3. Hate Speech and Cyberbullying

Deontological theory emphasizes the obligation to respect the dignity of every individual (Timmermann, 2023). Individuals with mature digital literacy have the ability to communicate ethically, understand the negative impacts of hate speech, and interact

positively in online communities (Jenkins et al., 2009). Lack of understanding of digital ethical norms and online empathy can lead to irresponsible behavior.

4. Intellectual Property Rights

Deontological theory supports the obligation to respect the rights and copyright of creators (Freeman, 2020). Individuals with adequate digital literacy have an understanding of intellectual property rights and the importance of providing proper attribution (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008). Lack of understanding of the laws and ethics related to digital content can lead to copyright infringement.

5. Digital Divide and Inclusivity.

From a deontological perspective, it can be argued that there is a moral obligation to ensure equitable access to technology (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2015). Digital literacy includes the ability to access and use technology effectively (Eshet-Alkalai, 2004). The digital divide hinders the fulfilment of individual potential and exacerbates inequalities, highlighting the importance of improving digital literacy for inclusivity.

CONCLUSION

This study reflects the urgency of a multidisciplinary approach in understanding the complexity of information in the digital media era. The integration of public interest theory, deontology, cyberspace, and diffusion of innovation shows that the problems of ethics, regulation, and digital media policy cannot be solved partially. Disinformation, privacy violations, hate speech, and inequality of access to technology are not only technical issues, but also reflect the weak ethical foundations and awareness of digital literacy in society. Therefore, understanding the digital media landscape requires a perspective that is not only normative, but also contextual to the social, cultural, and political dynamics that influence it. This finding emphasizes that effective digital policies are not only repressive, but must be promotive and educative, equipping society with critical capacity in navigating information.

The scientific implications of this study lie in its contribution to enriching the discourse on information ethics and digital media policy as a strategic field of study that continues to develop. This study opens up space for the development of a policy model that is more adaptive to technological innovation, while emphasizing the importance of digital literacy as a fundamental competency in a digital society. From an academic perspective, this study encourages the expansion of interdisciplinary studies between library and information science, communication studies, philosophy of ethics, and public policy. It is hoped that the results of this study can be a reference for academics and researchers to develop theoretical frameworks and policies that are responsive to contemporary challenges, as well as a basis for the development of digital literacy and information ethics curricula in higher education.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings and discussions in this study, it is recommended that further studies be conducted with a more specific approach to digital ethics issues in specific local and sectoral contexts, such as education, health, politics, and business. In-depth research in these sectors will provide a more contextual understanding of how digital media regulations and policies have direct implications for the user community. In addition, the development of evaluative instruments to measure the level of digital literacy and ethical awareness of users in

various social strata is also an urgent need, given the diversity of understanding and responses of society to digital information that continues to grow.

Further research is also recommended to explore effective forms of collaboration between state actors, the private sector, and civil society in formulating inclusive and sustainable digital media policies. In addition, a comparative study between Indonesia's digital policies and other countries that have good practices in managing digital information can enrich the treasury of information policy science and broaden theoretical and applied perspectives in developing adaptive and ethical regulatory systems. Thus, this suggestion is expected to be a foundation for further research that is sharper in responding to the challenges of ethics and policy in the ever-changing digital era.

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