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Digital Citizenship from an Anthropological Perspective: Transformations of Identity and the Reconfiguration of the Public Sphere in the Digital Age

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Abstract:

The rapid development of digital communication technologies has transformed the way individuals and societies interact. These technologies provide unprecedented speed, accessibility, and convenience in communication while offering broad access to knowledge and information. As a result, technology has become an essential part of modern life. This transformation has produced many positive outcomes, including improved opportunities for learning, collaboration, and social engagement, particularly when digital tools are used responsibly and ethically. However, the digital revolution also brings challenges. Negative effects may arise when ethical standards, legal regulations, and the principles governing social relationships are ignored.

In this context, digital citizenship has emerged as an important framework that guides responsible technology use. It represents a set of rules, values, and standards that encourage ethical digital behavior among all members of society. Digital citizenship ultimately promotes the effective use of technology while protecting individuals from potential risks and challenges in the digital environment.

Keywords: Digital Citizenship, Technology, Digital Ethics, Responsible Use, Digital Society.

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Introduction:

In the context of the digital revolution and the rapid pace of technological advancement, modern technologies have become an integral part of individuals' daily lives, given the significant facilities they provide in communication, interaction, and access to information. This digital transformation has contributed to strengthening social interaction and expanding the horizons of knowledge, which has positively influenced various aspects of human life. However, despite the many advantages associated with these transformations, they may also generate certain negative consequences when technologies are used in ways that disregard ethical norms, legal regulations, and the fundamental principles that govern social relations and societal order.

Within this context, the concept of digital citizenship emerges as an important guiding framework aimed at promoting the conscious and responsible use of technology. It is based on an approach that combines a preventive dimension" intended to protect individuals from the risks associated with digital technologies" and a motivational dimension that encourages the optimal utilization of their positive potential.

Digital citizenship can therefore be defined as a system of rules, standards, regulations, and values that govern the proper use of technology within the digital environment. This framework is essential for all members of society "both young and old" as it contributes to fostering responsible digital behavior and encouraging active participation in social development and progress. In essence, digital citizenship is founded on two fundamental principles: guiding individuals toward the rational and beneficial use of modern technologies, and protecting them from the risks associated with their use. In its most concise form, digital citizenship represents the conscious and intelligent engagement with technology.

1.Research Problem:

The contemporary world is undergoing profound and accelerated digital transformations that have fundamentally reshaped multiple dimensions of social and cultural life. Technology is no longer limited to being a set of technical tools used for communication or information exchange; rather, it has evolved into a new socio-cultural arena within which patterns of human interaction are constructed and individual as well as collective identities are continuously reconfigured. Within this context, the concept of digital citizenship has emerged as a normative and cultural framework that regulates the relationship between individuals and society in digital environments, while also defining the values, norms, and principles governing practices and behaviors in virtual spaces.

From an anthropological perspective, the digital environment cannot be understood merely as a technological domain; instead, it constitutes a dynamic social and cultural sphere in which new systems of symbols, meanings, and practices are produced. Within this sphere, novel forms of belonging, participation, and interaction are constantly being negotiated. These developments have revived fundamental questions concerning the nature of identity in the digital age and the ways in which the public sphere is being reconstructed within virtual environments that transcend conventional geographical and institutional boundaries. In this sense, digital space is no longer simply an extension of existing social reality; rather, it represents a distinct socio-cultural field in which individuals and groups interact according to evolving norms, symbolic systems, and cultural patterns. Such transformations call for an anthropological perspective capable of interpreting the symbolic and cultural dimensions of digital practices and examining their broader social implications.

Accordingly, the central research problem of this article can be formulated as follows:

How do digital transformations contribute to the reconfiguration of individual and collective identities and to the redefinition of the public sphere in the context of the emergence of digital citizenship from an ?.

2. Digital Citizenship:

Digital citizenship has been widely discussed in contemporary scholarly literature as a conceptual framework for understanding responsible engagement within digital environments. Mike Ribble defines digital citizenship as a set of standards and norms that govern the responsible and ethical use of digital technology within society. In this perspective, digital citizenship goes beyond merely knowing how to operate technological tools; it also involves understanding the appropriate behaviors individuals should adopt when interacting in digital environments (Mike, 2015,p15) . This definition reflects an important shift in the perception of technology, which is no longer viewed solely as a technical instrument but rather as a social and cultural space in which diverse forms of human interaction take place.

In educational literature, digital citizenship is also understood as a pedagogical process aimed at preparing individuals "particularly learners" to use digital technologies in a conscious and responsible manner. This process involves developing their technical competencies while simultaneously strengthening their awareness of the ethical and legal values associated with the use of digital technologies (Ribble Mike, 2007,p34) .

From another perspective, digital citizenship can be conceptualized as a form of social participation within the digital environment. Individuals interact with others through various electronic media, such as email, websites, and social networking platforms, which has contributed to the emergence of new patterns of social and cultural interaction within digital spaces. Scholars such as Karen Mossberger, Caroline Tolbert, and Ramona McNeal emphasize that digital citizenship is closely linked to participation, access to information, and engagement in digitally mediated civic life.

From an analytical standpoint, several fundamental characteristics can be identified as central to the concept of digital citizenship, including:

- ❖ Awareness of the nature of the digital environment and its various components.
- ❖ The possession of the technical skills necessary to use technology effectively and responsibly.
- ❖ Adherence to ethical norms and social standards that regulate behavior in digital spaces.

Contemporary studies further suggest that digital citizenship encompasses a system of rights, duties, and responsibilities that individuals must observe when using digital technologies. These include respecting intellectual property rights, protecting digital privacy, and adhering to principles of responsible conduct in online communication (Mossberger, 2008,p14) Scholarly literature also emphasizes that promoting a culture of digital citizenship has become an essential requirement in modern societies, particularly in light of the widespread diffusion of digital technologies. Achieving this goal requires cooperation among educational institutions, families, media organizations, and civil society institutions in order to promote responsible technological use and mitigate its potential negative consequences. Researchers such as Minjeong Choi highlight the importance of digital citizenship education in fostering responsible digital participation and civic engagement (Choi, 2016,p565).

Taken together, these definitions demonstrate that digital citizenship extends beyond the mere mas

tery of technological tools; it also involves the adoption of ethical and responsible behaviors within digital environments, thereby enabling technology to serve broader social and cultural development. At the same time, scholarly studies stress the importance of raising awareness about the risks associated with the misuse of digital technologies, including privacy violations, information theft, cyberbullying, and online fraud issues that have become significant challenges in contemporary digital societies.

4. Comparison Between Traditional Citizenship and Digital Citizenship:

The transformations brought about by the digital revolution have generated new forms of social interaction, contributing to the emergence of the concept of digital citizenship as a contemporary extension of the broader notion of citizenship in modern societies. Citizenship is no longer confined to the relationship between individuals and the state within the physical or institutional sphere; it has increasingly come to encompass the practices and behaviors individuals engage in within digital environments, along with the associated rights, duties, and responsibilities (Al-Dahshan, 2016,p14).

Within this evolving context, scholars have examined the distinctions between traditional citizenship and digital citizenship across several key dimensions. These differences highlight the ways in which technological change has expanded the scope of civic participation and redefined the spaces in which citizenship is practiced. Among the most prominent distinctions are the following:

Table: Comparison Between Traditional Citizenship and Digital Citizenship:

Comparative Dimension	Traditional Citizenship	Digital Citizenship
Concept	A legal and social relationship that links the individual to the state, based on rights, duties, and participation in public life within the real social environment.	A pattern of interaction and social practice that occurs within the digital environment, based on the responsible use of technology and adherence to rules of digital conduct.
Nature of	A real society	A virtual digital society in

Society	characterized by direct interaction among individuals within specific geographical boundaries.	which interaction takes place through the Internet and modern communication technologies.
Nature of Individuals	Real individuals who interact directly within the social environment.	Digital identities or online accounts that represent individuals in digital space.
Interaction Environment	A real social environment based on face-to-face communication and direct interpersonal interaction.	An electronic environment relying on computers, smartphones, and Internet networks.
Means of Communication	Direct communication or traditional channels such as meetings and social institutions.	Electronic communication through email, social media platforms, and digital websites.
Field of Participation	Participation in social, political, and cultural activities within the local	Digital participation through online platforms and virtual communities.

	community.	
Nature of Values	Based on values such as national belonging, loyalty, and adherence to laws.	Based on values such as digital responsibility, respect for privacy and intellectual property, and online communication ethics.
Security and Trust	Relies primarily on state institutions and legal frameworks regulating society.	May face challenges related to cybersecurity, privacy protection, and data security.
Intellectual Property Rights	Generally protected through clear legal frameworks and formal institutions.	Often faces challenges due to the ease of copying and disseminating digital content online.
Mode of Acquisition	Acquired through socialization and civic education within the family, school, and society.	Acquired through digital education and training in technological skills and digital responsibility.

Source: Prepared by the author based on literature related to digital citizenship.

This comparison demonstrates that the transition toward the digital environment has not merely transformed the means of

communication; it has also contributed to the reconfiguration of social identity and patterns of participation within the public sphere. Digital space has increasingly become a new cultural domain in which social relations and cultural symbols are continuously reconstructed. At the same time, new forms of belonging and interaction have emerged that transcend the geographical boundaries of traditional societies. From this perspective, digital citizenship can be understood as a broader socio-cultural transformation reflecting the shift of contemporary societies from the material social sphere to the networked digital environment.

5. The Nine Elements of Digital Citizenship in the Context of Identity Transformations and the Digital Public Sphere:

The rapid digital transformations characterizing the contemporary world have led to the emergence of new patterns of social and cultural interaction, which in turn have contributed to the redefinition of the concept of citizenship within the digital environment. Citizenship is no longer confined to the legal and political relationship linking individuals to the state within the traditional social sphere. Rather, it increasingly encompasses the practices and behaviors individuals perform within digital spaces enabled by the Internet and modern communication technologies. In this context, the concept of digital citizenship has emerged as a regulatory and ethical framework that defines responsible uses of digital technology and promotes individuals' participation in social and cultural life within the digital society (Al-Shammari, 2019,p32).

Several scholarly studies have attempted to conceptualize the dimensions of digital citizenship through a set of elements that regulate individuals' behavior in digital environments. Among the most influential frameworks is the Nine Elements of Digital Citizenship model proposed by Mike Ribble, which offers a comprehensive approach to understanding digital citizenship. This model identifies key domains that organize the relationship between humans and technology in the digital age. The significance of these elements extends beyond technical considerations to include broader

social and cultural dimensions that reflect the transformations affecting the public sphere in the context of expanding digital media. Digital platforms have thus become new arenas for social interaction and for the construction of individuals' digital identities (Al-Harithi, 2020,p76).

5.1 Digital Access:

Digital access refers to the provision of equal opportunities for all individuals to access and use digital technologies in various aspects of life. This dimension represents one of the fundamental pillars of a digital society, as inequalities in access to technology may lead to what is commonly referred to as the digital divide between individuals or communities. From a sociological perspective, digital access constitutes a necessary condition for participation in the digital public sphere and engagement with broader social issues (Al-Qahtani , 2018,p58).

5.2. Digital Commerce:

Digital commerce refers to buying and selling activities conducted through electronic media and digital platforms. These activities have become an integral component of the contemporary economy, as technological developments have facilitated economic exchange across geographical boundaries. However, this transformation requires users to be aware of the legal and ethical regulations governing electronic transactions in order to ensure consumer protection and respect for intellectual property rights. (Al-Otaibi, 2017,p104)

5.3. Digital Communication:

Digital communication refers to the exchange of information and interaction among individuals through electronic media such as email, messaging applications, and social networking platforms. These technologies have significantly reduced geographical distances and facilitated the emergence of new forms of social relationships based on networked interaction. Consequently, the public sphere has been reconfigured into a more open and pluralistic environment for participation and expression (Al-Harithi A. b, 2020,p82).

5.4. Digital Literacy:

Digital literacy refers to individuals' possession of the knowledge and skills necessary to use digital technologies effectively. This includes the ability to search for information, analyze it, critically evaluate it, and use it responsibly. In the context of the widespread diffusion of digital technologies, digital literacy has become an essential requirement for active participation in the digital society and engagement with diverse sources of digital knowledge (Al-Maliki, 2021,p92).

5.5. Digital Etiquette:

Digital etiquette refers to the set of ethical rules and behavioral standards that regulate individuals' conduct within digital environments. These include respecting others during online communication, adhering to norms of constructive dialogue on digital platforms, and avoiding unethical practices such as harassment or cyberbullying (Al-Zahrani, 2019,p102).

5.6. Digital Law:

Digital law encompasses the legal frameworks and regulations governing the use of technology and the Internet within society. These laws aim to protect individuals from digital crimes such as hacking, data theft, and violations of privacy and intellectual property rights (Al-Harbi, 2018,p88) .

5.7. Digital Rights and Responsibilities:

Digital rights and responsibilities refer to the freedoms individuals enjoy in digital environments, such as freedom of expression, the right to privacy, and access to information. However, these rights are accompanied by responsibilities that require users to adhere to ethical and legal norms governing interaction within digital society (Al-Qarni, 2020,p85).

5.8. Digital Health and Wellness:

Digital health and wellness address the physical and psychological impacts associated with the use of digital technologies. These include issues such as eye strain, sleep disturbances resulting from excessive device usage, as well as psychological concerns related to digital addiction or exposure to cyberbullying (Al-Shahri, 2019,p97).

5.9. Digital Security:

Digital security refers to the measures individuals take to protect their data and information within digital environments. Such measures include the use of antivirus software, secure passwords, and data backup practices. Digital security is therefore a fundamental element for ensuring information safety and protecting users from risks associated with cybercrime .

These elements demonstrate that digital citizenship extends beyond merely mastering technological tools; rather, it represents a comprehensive system of values, norms, and practices that regulate social interaction within digital environments. From an anthropological perspective, this transformation reflects the transition of societies from traditional social spaces to a new networked sphere in which digital identities and new forms of belonging and social participation are continuously constructed. Consequently, digital citizenship can be understood as a cultural and social framework that contributes to interpreting the transformations affecting the public sphere in the digital age. Social participation is no longer limited to physical spaces but increasingly extends to digital environments that have become an integral component of contemporary
social life.

6.Digital Anthropology:

Digital anthropology is considered one of the emerging fields within contemporary anthropological studies. It focuses on examining the interactive relationship between humans and digital technologies, as well as analyzing how digital media contribute to reshaping patterns of culture and social communication in contemporary societies. This perspective is grounded in the fundamental assumption that digital technologies are not merely neutral technical tools; rather, they constitute an active component of the cultural and social structure of society. In this sense, digital technologies influence patterns of social relations, modes of communication, and the production of symbolic meanings within everyday life.

From this perspective, digital space is understood as a new social and cultural domain that transcends its purely technical dimensions to become a field of social interaction and cultural production. Within this environment, new social practices and multiple forms of interaction emerge, while digital identities develop in ways that intersect with individuals' offline identities. Consequently, digital presence increasingly becomes an extension of social existence in the physical world. For this reason, digital anthropology seeks to analyze social life within digital environments by examining users' everyday practices, patterns of communication through social networking platforms, and the cultural symbols produced within virtual communities (Horst, 2012,p57).

This approach also emphasizes that understanding phenomena related to digital cannot be separated from the cultural and social contexts in which technologies are used. Digital technologies are not utilized in identical ways across different societies; rather, their uses are shaped by the prevailing cultural values and social norms within each community. Accordingly, studying digital citizenship from an anthropological perspective provides deeper insight into the transformations occurring within the public sphere in the digital age, where culture and technology intersect in reshaping patterns of belonging and social interaction.

7.AProposed Framework for Promoting and Disseminating Digital Citizenship in Schools and Society: An Anthropological Perspective:

In light of the rapid digital transformations characterizing contemporary societies, technology has become an integral component of the social and cultural structures of modern communities. Its presence has expanded significantly in everyday life, particularly within educational contexts as well as across broader domains of social life. Consequently, the primary challenge is no longer centered on limiting the use of technology or reducing its presence, but rather on guiding and regulating its use within appropriate cultural and social frameworks. Such regulation seeks to achieve a balance between benefiting from the vast opportunities

offered by digital technologies and mitigating the potential risks associated with their misuse. Within this context, the promotion of digital citizenship emerges as a crucial normative framework that organizes individuals' relationships with technology in digital environments.

From an anthropological perspective, digital citizenship can be understood as a new pattern of social and cultural practices emerging within digital spaces, where traditional social values intersect with new forms of networked interaction. Accordingly, the development of digital citizenship does not merely involve teaching technical skills; it also requires fostering cultural and social awareness that enables individuals to understand their rights and responsibilities within digital environments and to engage with technology in a conscious and responsible manner across various domains of life.

In this context, several scholars have proposed educational and social mechanisms for promoting the culture of digital citizenship within schools and society. Among the notable contributions is the framework proposed by Tamer (Tamer, 2017,p66) ,which outlines a comprehensive model for developing digital citizenship culture based on a set of key dimensions that integrate educational, social, and cultural perspectives.

First Axis: Digital Citizenship as an Academic Course:

This dimension proposes the introduction of a specialized course on digital citizenship that addresses its core concepts and various dimensions while aiming to develop students' skills in the responsible use of technology. From an anthropological perspective, such an approach contributes to transmitting digital values to younger generations as part of the broader process of digital socialization, which accompanies ongoing cultural transformations in society.

Second Axis: Digital Citizenship as an Educational Approach:

The teaching of digital citizenship should not be confined to a single course; rather, it can be integrated across different educational curricula and grade levels. The topics addressed should correspond to students' developmental stages and their patterns of technology use.

Such integration allows digital values to be gradually embedded within the broader cultural and educational framework of schooling.

Third Axis: Digital Citizenship as an Educational Value and Technological Practice:

Promoting a culture of digital citizenship requires organizing scientific seminars, workshops, and training programs within educational institutions targeting both teachers and students. These activities contribute to enhancing awareness of responsible digital practices and support the development of an institutional culture grounded in the ethical use of technology.

Fourth Axis: Digital Citizenship as an Integrated Educational Unit:

Topics related to digital citizenship can also be incorporated into computer science or information technology courses across various educational levels. Each educational stage may address digital skills and values appropriate to students' levels of technological engagement and digital interaction.

Fifth Axis: Digital Citizenship as a Social Practice:

The promotion of digital citizenship culture should extend beyond schools to encompass society as a whole. Community awareness campaigns targeting parents and broader social groups are therefore essential in strengthening the role of families in guiding children's use of technology and monitoring their digital activities.

Sixth Axis: The Role of Social Institutions:

Various social institutions play a central role in disseminating digital citizenship culture. These include educational, religious, media, and cultural institutions such as schools, universities, media organizations, cultural centers, and civil society organizations. Together, these institutions contribute to raising awareness about responsible digital practices and promoting ethical technology use.

Seventh Axis: Future-Oriented Studies:

This dimension highlights the importance of forward-looking research aimed at exploring emerging technological developments and their societal implications. Examples include flipped learning, virtual reality technologies, and social networking platforms, as well

as the potential of these technologies to support the development of digital citizenship culture.

Eighth Axis: The Use of Technological Tools:

This axis emphasizes the use of technological tools themselves to promote digital citizenship culture. Digital learning platforms, smart applications, and virtual reality technologies can place learners in simulated real-life situations that enable them to practice digital citizenship values within interactive learning environments.

8.Anthropological Analytical Reading:

These dimensions demonstrate that digital citizenship is not merely a set of regulatory rules governing the use of technology; rather, it represents a broader cultural and social transformation reflecting the reconfiguration of the relationship between humans and technology in the digital age. Through institutions such as schools, families, and community organizations, new patterns of socialization" often referred to as digital socialization "are emerging. Within this process, individuals learn how to interact within digital spaces according to evolving systems of social norms and cultural values.

From this perspective, digital citizenship can be understood as part of the broader anthropological transformations occurring in contemporary societies. Social space is no longer limited to traditional physical environments; instead, it increasingly encompasses digital spaces in which social identities and patterns of participation within the public sphere are continuously reconstructed. Consequently, promoting a culture of digital citizenship becomes a fundamental requirement for building a digitally aware society capable of responding constructively to rapid technological transformations

Conclusion:

The contemporary technological revolution has generated profound transformations in patterns of social and cultural life. Digital technologies have become an integral part of the daily

experiences of individuals and societies, no longer functioning merely as auxiliary tools but rather as fundamental components in organizing communication, accessing knowledge, and managing various aspects of everyday life. These developments have facilitated many dimensions of social life by providing digital media with extensive opportunities for social interaction and the rapid and efficient exchange of information.

Despite these advantages, the digital revolution also presents a range of challenges that affect the social and cultural structures of contemporary societies. Certain forms of irresponsible technological use may lead to negative consequences for both individuals and communities. In this context, the promotion of digital citizenship emerges as an essential ethical and cultural framework that regulates the use of technology within digital society.

From an anthropological perspective, interactions with technology cannot be separated from the cultural values and social norms that shape individual behavior within society. Guiding the use of digital technologies therefore requires strengthening individuals' social and ethical awareness and encouraging them to engage with technology responsibly in ways that respect ethical, religious, and legal principles. It also requires collaboration among various social institutions" such as families, schools, and media organizations "in order to promote a culture of conscious and responsible technological use.

Within this framework, strengthening digital citizenship becomes a fundamental necessity for building a balanced digital society capable of benefiting from the vast opportunities provided by technology while minimizing its potential negative effects. In this way, technology can evolve from being merely a technical instrument into an effective means of supporting social and cultural development and fostering positive interaction among individuals within the contemporary digital sphere.

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