Challenges of Multiculturalism in the Digital Era in Virtual Tolerance Practices between Ethnicities

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Abstract: This study explores the transformation of interethnic relations in the digital era, focusing on virtual tolerance practices across ethnic groups. With the advent of digital communication platforms, interactions among diverse communities have increased, yet so have challenges such as digital segregation, algorithmic bias, disinformation, and ethnic-based hate speech. Employing a qualitative method through digital ethnography, the research investigates forms of tolerant communication, identifies barriers to virtual tolerance, and analyzes strategic adaptations from both minority and majority groups in fostering inclusive online dialogues. The findings emphasize the urgency of strengthening multicultural digital literacy as a long-term solution to address virtual intolerance. The study also proposes practical and collaborative efforts among educational institutions, government bodies, and digital platforms to create a socially harmonious virtual space. The novelty of this research lies in its combination of multiculturalism theory with digital literacy and its specific focus on interethnic tolerance practices within digital environments.

Keywords: Multicultural Digital Literacy, Interethnic Tolerance, Digital Ethnography, Virtual Communication, Social Harmony.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi transformasi hubungan antar-etnis di era digital dengan fokus pada praktik toleransi virtual antar kelompok etnis. Kehadiran platform komunikasi digital telah meningkatkan interaksi lintas komunitas yang beragam, namun juga memunculkan tantangan seperti segregasi digital, bias algoritmik, disinformasi, dan ujaran kebencian berbasis etnis. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode etnografi digital, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk komunikasi toleran, hambatan terhadap praktik toleransi virtual, serta strategi adaptasi yang dilakukan oleh kelompok mayoritas dan minoritas dalam membangun dialog daring yang inklusif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan pentingnya penguatan literasi digital berbasis multikultural sebagai

solusi jangka panjang terhadap intoleransi daring. Penelitian ini juga menawarkan gagasan kolaboratif antara lembaga pendidikan, pemerintah, dan platform digital dalam menciptakan ruang maya yang harmonis secara sosial. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi teori multikulturalisme dan literasi digital dengan fokus khusus pada praktik toleransi antar-etnis dalam ruang digital..

Kata Kunci: Literasi Digital Multikultural, Toleransi Antaretnis, Etnografi Digital, Komunikasi Virtual, Harmoni Sosial.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and advances in information technology have brought about major changes in human social interactions.[1] In today's digital era, communication is no longer limited to physical space and time, but has developed across borders through various social media platforms and digital applications.[2] In this context, the world community lives in an interconnected virtual network, where individuals from various ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds interact directly or indirectly. This phenomenon marks a new era in intergroup relations, which are no longer local but transnational and intercultural. Multiculturalism, as an idea that emphasizes the recognition and respect for diversity, is becoming increasingly relevant in responding to these dynamics. However, on the other hand, the digital era also brings new challenges in the practice of virtual inter-ethnic tolerance, where boundaries of identity, values, and interests often lead to friction.[3]

The development of digital technology has created a virtual interaction space that promises inclusivity, but in practice also holds great potential for conflict.[4] Data from digital media monitoring institutions such as SAFEnet noted a

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[1] Darwin Effendi and Dan Achmad Wahidy, "Pemanfaatan Teknologi Dalam Proses Pembelajaran Menuju Pembelajaran Abad 21," *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Program Pascasarjana Universitas Pgri Palembang*, 2019, 125–29.

[2] M and Katsikeas Vrontis, D, Christofi, "Revisiting International Marketing Strategy in a Digital Era: Opportunities, Challenges, and Research Directions," *International Markentig Review*, 2016, 1–50; Nikolaos Alexandros Perifanis and Fotis Kitsios, "Investigating the Influence of Artificial Intelligence on Business Value in the Digital Era of Strategy: A Literature Review," *Information (Switzerland)* 14, no. 2 (2023), https://doi.org/10.3390/info14020085.

[3] Roni Susanto et al., "Interreligious Harmonization (Analytic Study of Kalicinta Village, Kotabumi, Lampung)," *Jurnal Kodifikasia: Jurnal Penelitian Keagamaan San Sosial-Budaya* 17, no. 1 (2023), https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.21154/kodifikasia.v17i1.5729.

[4] Azam Syukur Rahmatullah et al., "Digital Era 4.0: The Contribution to Education and Student Psychology," *Linguistics and Culture Review* 6 (2022): 89–107, https://doi.org/10.21744/lingcure.v6ns3.2064.

significant increase in ethnic and religious-based hate speech on social media platforms. Digital interactions often involve strong identity expressions, which sometimes lead to resistance from other groups. Cases such as cyberbullying, stereotyping, and online discrimination against minority groups reflect that the digital space has not yet become a completely friendly arena for diversity. In fact, social media algorithms that are filter bubbles actually exacerbate identity polarization by presenting information that reinforces the biases of certain groups. In the midst of this situation, the practice of inter-ethnic tolerance virtually becomes an urgent issue to be studied in depth, especially within the framework of the sustainability of a peaceful and harmonious multicultural society.[5]

Although digital technology opens up opportunities for broad inter-ethnic interaction, the practice of inter-ethnic tolerance in cyberspace still faces various serious challenges.[6] Among these challenges are the emergence of identity conflicts, the dominance of majority narratives, the marginalization of minority groups, and the lack of digital literacy that is critical of diversity. The absence of shared ethical norms in virtual spaces causes many individuals to feel free to express their opinions without considering the impact on other groups. In addition, many online communities are trapped in the exclusivity of group identities, which leads to miscommunication, collective judgment, and even symbolic violence. This condition not only disrupts social harmony but also creates distance and distrust between groups. Therefore, this study is important to identify the main challenges faced in the practice of virtual tolerance between ethnicities in the digital era.

To address these challenges, a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach is needed to understand the dynamics of multicultural interactions in digital space. One solution is through strengthening digital literacy based on multiculturalism that prioritizes the values of equality, respect, and empathy for other groups. In addition, there needs to be a more inclusive content management

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[5] Edy Sutrisno, "Aktualisasi Moderasi Beragama Di Lembaga Pendidikan," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 12, no. 2 (2019): 323–48, https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v12i2.113; Royke Lantupa Kumowal, "Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Tanggapan Disrupsi Era Digital," *DA'AT : Jurnal Teologi Kristen* 5, no. 2 (2024): 126–50, https://ejournal-iakn-manado.ac.id/index.php/daat/article/view/1739.

[6] Ismail Suardi Wekke, "Harmoni Sosial Dalam Keberagaman Dan Keberagamaan Masyarakat Minoritas Muslim Papua Barat," *Kalam* 10, no. 2 (2017): 295, https://doi.org/10.24042/klm.v10i2.3; Wahyu Widodo, Roni Susanto, and Hidayat Deden, "The Meaning of Trust in Surat Al-Ahzab Verse 72 the Perspective of Sheikh Ustman Al-Khubawi," *Proceeding of Conference on Strengthening Islamic Studies in The Digital Era* 3, no. 1 (2023).

and moderation strategy for digital space, which can suppress the spread of hate speech and increase the participation of digital citizens in building a tolerant ecosystem. Multicultural education must also penetrate cyberspace through digital campaigns, online curricula, and the use of social media as an educational medium. The active role of civil society, government, academics, and digital platforms needs to be collaborated to create virtual space governance that supports inter-ethnic social cohesion.

Several previous studies have highlighted the relationship between digital technology and multiculturalism issues. Among them, the study by Sirajus et al. [7] shows that global communication networks create new, more fluid and complex identities, but also open up opportunities for inter-identity conflict. Meanwhile, a study by Suhendra[8] emphasizes that social media has become the main arena for the formation of public opinion which often gives rise to the polarization of ethnic and religious identities. In Indonesia, research by Khaerun[9] shows that content containing ethnic intolerance on social media increases after certain political events, and tends to influence the perception of community groups towards other ethnicities. However, from this study it can be concluded that there are still few studies that specifically explore the practice of inter-ethnic tolerance virtually and the challenges that accompany it in the context of digital multiculturalism. Therefore, this study is here to fill the gap in this study.

This research will use a qualitative approach with a digital ethnography study method, which allows researchers to observe, record, and analyze inter-ethnic communication practices in virtual space in depth.[10] Data collection techniques are carried out through participant observation in multi-ethnic digital communities, in-depth interviews with participants from various ethnic backgrounds, and analysis of relevant digital content. Data analysis will use thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns of tolerance practices, forms of

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[7] Sirajul Fuad Zis, Nursyirwan Effendi, and Elva Ronaning Roem, "Perubahan Perilaku Komunikasi Generasi Milenial Dan Generasi Z Di Era Digital," *Satwika : Kajian Ilmu Budaya Dan Perubahan Sosial* 5, no. 1 (2021): 69–87, https://doi.org/10.22219/satwika.v5i1.15550.

[8] Suhendra Suhendra and Feny Selly Pratiwi, "Peran Komunikasi Digital Dalam Pembentukan Opini Publik: Studi Kasus Media Sosial," *Iapa Proceedings Conference*, 2024, 293, https://doi.org/10.30589/proceedings.2024.1059.

[9] Khaerun Rijaal M. Ardini, "Fenomena Intoleransi Antar Umat Beragama Serta Peran Sosial Media Akun Instagram Jaringan Gusdurian Indonesia Dalam Menyampaikan Pesan Toleransi," *SYIAR: JurnalKomunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 03, no. 2 (2020): 36–50.

[10] M. Hammersley and P. Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice (3rd Ed.)* (Routledge, 2007), 45.

challenges, and adaptation strategies used by individuals or groups in maintaining multicultural relationships virtually.[11]

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the main challenges faced in the practice of virtual tolerance between ethnic groups in the digital era. In addition, this study also aims to understand the dynamics of inter-ethnic communication in digital space, examine the factors that strengthen or hinder the practice of tolerance, and formulate policy recommendations and strategies that can support the development of a peaceful multicultural society in digital space. This research has a high urgency considering the increasing social tensions triggered by unhealthy digital interactions between ethnic groups. If not managed properly, virtual conflicts can result in real conflicts that threaten social cohesion and the stability of multicultural societies. On the other hand, digital space also has the potential to be a strategic medium to strengthen the practice of tolerance and solidarity between ethnic groups, if used wisely. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the challenges and solutions in this context is needed to form public policies, design digital education, and strengthen the practice of a peaceful culture amidst diversity.

The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on the practice of inter-ethnic tolerance in virtual space, which has rarely been studied comprehensively in the context of digital multiculturalism. In addition, the digital ethnographic approach used provides a depth of analysis that has not been widely carried out in previous studies. This study also proposes an integration between multiculturalism theory and digital literacy as a new conceptual framework in responding to the challenges of online intolerance. Thus, this study not only contributes theoretically, but also offers a practical model for the development of digital technology-based tolerance education.

DISCUSSION

Transformation of Ethnic Interaction in Digital Space

The digital era has drastically changed the way humans interact, including in inter-ethnic relations.[12] If previously cross-ethnic interactions tended to be limited to certain geographical areas such as schools, workplaces, or public spaces,

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[11] Darmiyati Zuchdi and Wiwiek Afifah, *Analisis Konten, Etnografi, Dan Grounded Theory Dan Hermeneutika Dalam Penelitian* (Jakarta: PT Bumi Aksara, 2021), 90.

[12] Jeni Danurahman, Danang Prasetyo, and Hendra Hermawan, "Kajian Pendidikan Multikultural Di Era Digital," *Jurnal Kalacakra: Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan* 2, no. 1 (2021): 8, https://doi.org/10.31002/kalacakra.v2i1.3515.

now these boundaries have almost disappeared due to the presence of information and communication technology. Social media, online forums, messaging applications, and various other digital platforms have created new spaces where intercultural and interidentity encounters become more possible and more frequent. This transformation has had a major impact on the way society views and interacts with ethnic differences.[13] But like two sides of a coin, the advancement of digital technology presents both opportunities and threats in inter-ethnic relations. One of the greatest opportunities of the presence of digital space is the ability to build bridges between different groups. Social media, for example, allows individuals from different ethnic backgrounds to communicate with each other, exchange ideas, share cultures, and build social networks without geographical boundaries. Through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter, people from different ethnic groups can witness the traditions, languages, foods, and ways of life of other ethnic groups firsthand. Multicultural content created by content creators from various ethnic backgrounds can enrich the perspective of the global community on cultural diversity.[14]

Moreover, digital interactions can create inclusive dialogue spaces. Discussion forums such as Reddit, Quora, or other online communities provide opportunities for individuals to ask, learn, and discuss differences in identity in a more open manner. This is where we see how digital space has the potential to be an effective means of cross-cultural learning, which if managed wisely, can foster collective awareness of the importance of tolerance and respect for diversity. In this context, digital space also opens up opportunities for minority ethnic groups to voice their identities and fight for their existence. In many countries, minority communities that were previously marginalized in mainstream media can now build their own narratives through digital media. They can create content, spread discourse, and strengthen solidarity across communities through digital

[13] Endrise Septina Rawanoko et al., "The Use of Social Media in Ethic Digital Perspective," *Jurnal Civics: Media Kajian Kewarganegaraan* 18, no. 1 (2021): 148–57, https://doi.org/10.21831/jc.v18i1.40036.

[14] Yudha Catur Pamungkas, Agoes Moh. Moefad, and Ryan Purnomo, "Konstruksi Realitas Sosial Di Indonesia Dalam Peran Media Dan Identitas Budaya Di Era Globalisasi," *Metta : Jurnal Ilmu Multidisiplin* 4, no. 4 (2024): 28–36, https://doi.org/10.37329/metta.v4i4.3737.

campaigns, hashtags, or online social movements. Thus, the digital world provides a stage for fairer and more equal representation.[15]

However, along with these opportunities, there are serious threats that accompany the transformation of inter-ethnic interactions in the digital world. One of them is the phenomenon of digital segregation, namely a condition in which individuals tend to form virtual communities that are ethnically, culturally, or ideologically homogeneous.[16] This is compounded by social media algorithms designed to reinforce user preferences. As a result, users are exposed more often to content that aligns with their identity or views, and less likely to engage with dissenting voices. This phenomenon is known as a digital echo chamber, where only the same voices are heard and reaffirmed, while dissenting voices are ignored or even countered.[17] This condition has a direct impact on the formation of perceptions and attitudes towards other ethnic groups. The lack of authentic cross-ethnic interaction in the digital space allows stereotypes and prejudices to develop without being confronted with a more objective reality.[18] In certain situations, these prejudices can develop into negative sentiments that are manifested in the form of hate speech. This phenomenon has occurred in many parts of the world, including Indonesia, where social media often becomes a place for spreading ethnic hatred that divides society.[19]

Another threat is disinformation or the spread of hoaxes that use ethnic issues as a means of provocation. In many cases, fake or manipulative news is spread massively to create hatred against certain ethnic groups. This situation is often exploited by political actors for electoral interests, or by radical groups to strengthen their exclusivist narratives. With its very fast and wide spread, digital space becomes a vulnerable area for horizontal ethnic-based conflicts that initially

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[15] Nuhsandriya Hermawan, Dinie Anggraeni Dewi, and Muhammad Irfan Ardiansyah, "Budaya Di Era Digital: Pengaruhnya Terhadap Masyarakat Indonesia," *MARAS: Jurnal Penelitian Multidisiplin* 2, no. 1 (2024): 1–6, https://doi.org/10.60126/maras.v2i1.110.

[16] Rafly Ramadhani Santoso and Edy Soesanto, "Integrasi Teknologi Informasi Dengan Nilai-Nilai Pancasiladan Pada Era Multikulturalisme," *Socius: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 1, no. June (2024): 27–34, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11388129.

[17] Roni Susanto and d Afif Ulin Nuhaa Muhamma, "Transformasi Budaya Islam Nusantara Di Tengah Tantangan Modernitas: Peran Nahdatul Ulama," in *Trajectory Visi Kemanusiaan Sarjana NU* (Publica Indonesia Utama, 2024), 468–77.

[18] Wekke, "Harmoni Sosial Dalam Keberagaman Dan Keberagamaan Masyarakat Minoritas Muslim Papua Barat"; Susanto et al., "Interreligious Harmonization (Analytic Study of Kalicinta Village, Kotabumi, Lampung)."

[19] Naila Zulfa Puspita Sari et al., "Media Sosial Dan Penguatan Nasionalisme Dalam Tren Dan Implikasinya Era Digital," *Jma)* 2, no. 5 (2024): 3031–5220.

start in cyberspace and have the potential to spread to the real world. On the other hand, digital inter-ethnic interactions are also prone to miscommunication. Differences in expression, language, or humor can easily be misunderstood without adequate cultural context. Comments that are considered normal by one group may be considered offensive by another group. Insensitivity to diverse digital cultural norms often triggers debate, even hostility between groups.[20]

This transformation shows that the way individuals and communities interpret ethnic differences in the digital era is no longer the same as in previous eras. Identities are now not only formed locally and traditionally, but are also actively constructed and negotiated in virtual spaces. Ethnic identities become more dynamic, flexible, and exposed to global influences.[21] On the one hand, this opens up new possibilities for building a broader and more inclusive multicultural awareness. On the other hand, this condition also opens up space for narrative battles, truth claims, and identity hegemony. Digital space becomes a new field where ethnic identities are not only displayed, but also at stake. Viral content can influence the way people view certain ethnicities, shape public opinion, and even influence state policies. In this context, it is important to instill awareness of ethical responsibility in communicating digitally, especially in the context of ethnic diversity. Digital literacy that is not only technical, but also ethical and multicultural, is an important key in building a healthy and fair digital ecosystem.[22]

The transformation of inter-ethnic interactions in the digital era brings great opportunities for building tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and strengthening global social cohesion. However, the threat of digital segregation, polarization, and hate speech cannot be ignored. For this, a collective strategy is needed involving

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[20] Auliyasyahda Allathief, Alfina Rohmanina Arifah, and Bakti Fatwa Anbiya, "Membangun Kebhinekaan Di Era Digital: Peran Platform Media Sosial Dalam Meningkatkan Kesadaran Multikultural," *Multidisciplinary Indonesian Center Journal (MICJO)* 1, no. 2 (2024): 1008–19, https://doi.org/10.62567/micjo.v1i2.113; Ari Harsono and Aqila Mazi, "Representasi Etnis Tionghoa Dalam Media: Analisis Perbandingan Di Berita Daring Tirto.Id, Republika.Co.Id, Dan Tempo.Co," *Journal of Earth Kingdom* 1, no. 2 (2024): 57–68, https://journal-iasssf.com/index.php/JEK/article/view/552%0Ahttps://journal-iasssf.com/index.php/JEK/article/download/552/146.

[21] M Hasan, "Konsep Moderasi Beragama: Tantangan Dan Peluang Terhadap Pendidikan Multikultural Di Era Digitalisasi," *Maximal Journal: Jurnal Ilmiah Bidang Sosial, Ekonomi, Budaya Dan Pendidikan* 2, no. 3 (2025): 289–96, https://malaqbipublisher.com/index.php/MAKSI.

[22] Mufti Malik Falhadi and Ikrom Bahari, "Membuka Peluang Menyelami Pendidikan Multikultural Di Era Digital," *Indo-MathEdu Intellectuals Journal* 5, no. 3 (2024): 3172–80, https://doi.org/10.54373/imeij.v5i3.1203.

the state, civil society, educational institutions, and digital platforms to form an inclusive, just, and tolerant cyberspace. Amidst the unstoppable pace of technology, humans must remain the main actors who maintain ethics, empathy, and respect in every interaction, both in the real world and in cyberspace.

Virtual Inter-Ethnic Tolerance Practices

Tolerance in the context of social life has long been the main foundation in maintaining harmony between groups, especially in multicultural societies. However, in the digital era, the practice of tolerance has undergone a shift in form and challenges. Virtual space is not only a meeting place for individuals from various ethnic backgrounds, but also an arena for exchanging ideas, expressing identity, and forming collective opinions. This is where the practice of inter-ethnic tolerance is tested directly: whether cyberspace is truly a unifying bridge, or whether it is actually a field of conflict that widens the gap between groups.[23] In digital reality, the practice of inter-ethnic tolerance can be found in various forms. One of the main forms is inclusive virtual communication that respects differences. Individuals who actively build positive narratives about cultural diversity, give space to minority voices, and avoid using words that have the potential to offend other ethnicities are concrete examples of digital tolerance. For example, on platforms such as Twitter or Instagram, many users actively share stories, cultures, or experiences from certain ethnic groups in the spirit of getting to know and understanding each other.

The role of digital culture cannot be ignored either. A positive digital culture that upholds inclusivity can create an online environment that is friendly to all ethnicities.[24] Virtual communities built on equality and dialogue are fertile ground for the growth of tolerance values. Some online communities even actively educate their members to avoid stereotypes, encourage cultural exchange, and open cross-ethnic discussions without prejudice. Such practices not only demonstrate tolerance, but also become a collective social learning process in cyberspace. However, the practice of virtual tolerance also faces various serious

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[23] Rahma Fajr Mawidha and Rahma Fajr Mawidha, "Internalisasi Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Beragama Dalam Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran Akidah Akhlak Kelas X Di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Banyuwangi Tahun Pelajaran 2021/2022," no. April (2022): 8.

[24] Lukis Alam, "Popular Piety and the Muslim Middle Class Bourgeoisie in Indonesia," *Al-Albab* 7, no. 2 (2018): 237, https://doi.org/10.24260/alalbab.v7i2.1039; Mahlil Nurul Ihsan et al., "Islamic Boarding School Culture Climate in Forming The Religious Attitude of Islamic Students in Modern and Agrobusiness Islamic Boarding Schools," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 4, no. 2 (2021): 362–82, https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v4i2.1492.

obstacles. One of them is the existence of stereotypes that are still strongly embedded in the collective memory of society, and are often repeated in online communication. Content that belittles, corners, or mocks certain ethnicities is spread in the form of memes, comments, or even covert campaigns.[25] These stereotypes not only perpetuate prejudice, but also create discomfort for the targeted ethnic group.

In addition, the spread of ethnic-based hoaxes is a major challenge in the practice of tolerance. Hoaxes that corner certain ethnic groups, especially those packaged in historical or political narratives, can create tensions between groups. In some cases, hoaxes even trigger social conflict in the real world. Weak information verification mechanisms, coupled with low digital literacy among some people, make the spread of hoaxes increasingly difficult to control. Another obstacle is the polarization of opinion in the digital space. Social media, with its algorithms that amplify similar content, tends to create groups that hold uniform views and reject different views. In this context, ethnic identity can become part of an exclusive narrative that is claimed to be the most correct by one group, and negates other groups. This kind of polarization hinders healthy dialogue, and ultimately damages the order of tolerance that should grow.

Facing these realities and obstacles, both individuals and communities need to develop adaptation strategies so that tolerance can be maintained in cyberspace. One of the most important strategies is increasing digital literacy based on multiculturalism. This literacy not only includes the technical ability to use digital media, but also concerns the critical ability to understand content, recognize hate speech, and appreciate the diversity of information and culture. With strong digital literacy, social media users can become agents of change who actively promote tolerance and reject all forms of online discrimination. Another adaptation strategy is to actively build dialogue in cyberspace. Ethnic groups, both majority and minority, need to open up a more open and respectful communication space. For example, through online discussions facilitated by communities or organizations, where each party can convey their experiences and views without fear of being

[25] Asif Maulana Muhammad et al., "Aksi Generasi Digital Yang Berkarakterdan Toleran," *Jurnal Intelek Dan Cendekiawan Nusantara* 1, no. 2 (2024): 679–87, https://jicnusantara.com/index.php/jicn.

attacked. This practice can build cross-ethnic empathy, which is an important basis for tolerance.[26]

In addition, it is also necessary to develop social monitoring mechanisms in digital media. Online communities can establish common rules that encourage tolerant behavior, as well as provide social sanctions for violations such as hate speech or discrimination. Community moderators or group admins can act as ethical guardians who ensure that virtual conversations take place with mutual respect. Overall, the practice of inter-ethnic tolerance in digital spaces is a reflection of the quality of our social relationships as a society. The virtual world is simply a reflection of the values and attitudes we bring from the real world. Therefore, maintaining tolerance in digital spaces requires collective awareness, adaptive skills, and a shared commitment to building an inclusive space. In an increasingly connected but fragmented world, virtual tolerance is not just an option, but an urgent need for the creation of a just, peaceful, and civilized digital society.

Building Digital Multicultural Literacy

Amidst the rapid transformation of information technology, digital space has become an inseparable part of human social life. The internet and social media are now the main medium for cross-group interaction, including inter-ethnicity. On the one hand, digital space holds great potential as an arena for dialogue, learning, and collaboration that crosses identity boundaries. However, on the other hand, the same space is also fertile ground for intolerance, discrimination, and hate speech based on ethnicity. To deal with this complexity, a strategic and long-term solution is needed, namely strengthening digital literacy based on multicultural values. Digital multicultural literacy is an effort to equip individuals with the ability to understand, manage, and utilize information technology critically, ethically, and inclusively in a diverse society. Conventional digital literacy often only focuses on the technical aspects of using technology: how to use applications, maintain data security, or avoid online fraud. In fact, the biggest challenge in the information age is not only technical skills, but also how someone uses technology in a pluralistic social context. This is where digital multicultural literacy becomes important, as it emphasizes the ability to communicate empathetically, respect

[26] MHD. Abror, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Bingkai Toleransi," *RUSYDIAH: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. 2 (2020): 137–48, https://doi.org/10.35961/rsd.v1i2.174.

differences in identity, and understand that every piece of content we create, share, or comment on has a real social impact.[27]

One of the main pillars of digital multicultural literacy is ethical literacy. In the digital space, where the boundaries of interaction are often anonymous and without direct supervision, individuals tend to feel free to express opinions without considering ethics. Ethical literacy aims to instill an awareness that every word, comment, or post reflects the values we bring and has the potential to influence others. In the context of inter-ethnic relations, ethical literacy encourages individuals to avoid speech that demeans, corners, or spreads stereotypes against certain ethnic groups. It also emphasizes the importance of voicing diversity constructively and not forcing the dominance of one group's identity over another. In addition, it is important to build critical awareness of algorithms. Many people do not yet realize that what they see on social media is not an objective representation of the real world, but rather the result of algorithmic curation that is adjusted to personal preferences. Social media algorithms are designed to display content that is considered "interesting" to users, based on previous interaction patterns. As a result, individuals can get trapped in a filter bubble or echo chamber—a circle of content that reinforces their own beliefs and closes off the possibility of encountering different perspectives. In an inter-ethnic context, this is especially dangerous because it narrows understanding, reinforces prejudice, and even encourages identity radicalization. Critical digital literacy teaches individuals to recognize that algorithms are not neutral, and to actively seek and verify information from various sources.[28]

Diversity-based media education is the next important pillar. The educational curriculum, both formal in schools and informal through training or digital communities, needs to include the dimension of multiculturalism as part of digital learning. Students and young people must be taught to recognize other cultures, understand the history of minority groups, and interpret differences as wealth, not threats. This learning can be developed through cross-cultural project

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[27] Fajri Sodik, "Pendidikan Toleransi Dan Relevansinya Dengan Dinamika Sosial Masyarakat Indonesia," *Tsamratul Fikri | Jurnal Studi Islam* 14, no. 1 (2020): 1, https://doi.org/10.36667/tf.v14i1.372; Robbin Dayyan Yahuda et al., "Totally Muslim Truly Intellectual-Based Holistic Education in Postgraduate Programs," *QALAMUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, Dan Agama* 16, no. 2 (2024): 1399–1410, https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v16i2.4104.

[28] Ricardo Sisco Turnip, "Peningkatan Literasi Digital Di Kalangan Pelajar: Pengenalan Dan Praktik Penggunaan Teknologi Pendidikan," *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 6, no. 4 (2023): 2302–10.

assignments, virtual collaboration with other ethnic communities, or critically analyzed case studies of digital conflicts. In addition, it is also necessary to develop educational tools and media—such as videos, podcasts, and infographics—that present alternative narratives to discriminatory content that is widely circulated in cyberspace. The role of educational institutions is very central in encouraging digital multicultural literacy. Schools, universities, and training centers must be pioneers in developing learning that combines digital skills and human values. Teachers and lecturers not only deliver material, but also become role models in demonstrating tolerant and inclusive attitudes in digital interactions. In this era, strengthening the capacity of teachers in understanding the dynamics of social media, online ethnic conflicts, and communication technology is very urgent. Education should not only produce graduates who are technologically proficient, but also those who have social intelligence and intercultural sensitivity.

In addition to educational institutions, the state also has a major responsibility in building a digital ecosystem that supports tolerance. Regulations that support the protection of vulnerable groups, prevention of hate speech, and handling of ethnic-based disinformation must be enforced consistently. However, regulations alone are not enough. The government needs to collaborate with civil society, religious organizations, and digital communities to design participatory literacy programs. Public campaigns on the theme of diversity, cross-cultural positive content competitions, and tolerant netizen movements are examples of educational interventions that can raise public awareness at large. Social media platforms must also bear the ethical responsibility of creating a safe and inclusive space. Many cases of online intolerance occur due to a lack of content moderation and weak detection of ethnic-based hate speech. Technology companies must invest in developing systems that can recognize local cultural contexts, train moderators from various backgrounds, and create more responsive reporting features.[29] At the same time, they also need to support content creators and communities that advocate for tolerance and provide access to adequate learning resources.

Building digital multicultural literacy cannot be done instantly. It is a process that involves a paradigm shift, investment in education, and the formation of a new culture in the digital space. However, this effort is very crucial,

[29] Yustinus J W Yuniarto, Ambrosius Heri Krismawanto, and Nerita Setiyaningtiyas, "Merefleksikan Kembali Toleransi Bagi Kebersamaan Yang Pluralistik Anatr Manusia," *Jayapagus Press, Ganaya : Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora* 6, no. 2 (2023): 397–411.

considering the increasing escalation of online intolerance that not only disrupts social life in cyberspace, but also has a real impact in the physical world. Horizontal conflicts, symbolic violence, and even social segregation are often rooted in toxic and unhealthy digital interactions. Thus, digital multicultural literacy is not only a technical solution, but also a foundation for building a civilized digital society. It is a bridge between technological progress and human values. It allows differences to dialogue, not fight. It creates a space where identities do not negate each other, but strengthen each other. In the midst of an increasingly connected world, social harmony cannot be built without inclusive and tolerant digital awareness. Digital multicultural literacy is a strategic step towards that future—a future where cyberspace truly reflects a just, peaceful, and respectful society.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the practice of inter-ethnic tolerance in digital space is a reflection of the complex social dynamics in the era of information technology. On the one hand, digital media enables cultural exchange, cross-identity learning, and multi-ethnic collaboration. However, on the other hand, the same space also opens up a large gap for the emergence of digital segregation, ethnic-based hoaxes, and identity polarization. By combining the digital ethnography approach and multiculturalism theory, this study successfully reveals that virtual tolerance requires more than just good intentions: it requires literacy, ethics, and critical awareness of the social and algorithmic structures behind online interactions. Strengthening digital multicultural literacy has proven to be a solution that is not only theoretical, but also practical in maintaining virtual social cohesion amidst diversity. This research can be further developed with a quantitative approach to map the level of digital multicultural literacy in various levels of society. In addition, focusing on specific case studies such as diaspora communities, indigenous minorities, or local digital platforms can provide a deeper contribution to understanding specific social contexts. Further authors are also advised to examine the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in ethnic content moderation and how this technology can be optimized to support virtual tolerance practices.

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