

Empowering Civil Society in the Digital Era: Preventing Lagging Behind in the Digital Civilization

Nisa Al Iffah

Universitas Andalas, Indonesia

Corresponding autor, email: nisaaliffah28@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the important role of civil society empowerment in facing the increasingly advancing digital civilization. In an era where digital technology dominates every aspect of life, civil society needs to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources required to fully benefit from this digital revolution. This study identifies challenges faced by civil society in the context of digital technology, including unequal access, information security, digital literacy, and ethical issues. Additionally, the research also explores strategies and solutions that can be used to empower civil society, enabling them to actively participate in the digital civilization and prevent potential lagging behind. The findings of this research provide valuable insights into how civil society can contribute to shaping an inclusive and just future digital civilization.

INTRODUCTION

The digital civilization plays a crucial role in the modern era for civil society. In this context, digital civilization refers to the massive transformation that has occurred alongside the development of information and communication technology. This affects nearly every aspect of our lives, and the importance of digital civilization cannot be overlooked. One vital aspect of digital civilization is easier access to information. With the internet, information from around the world can be accessed quickly and easily. This provides opportunities for civil society to access relevant knowledge, news, and data, which can be used to enhance understanding, make better decisions, and participate in public discussions. Additionally, digital

civilization enables active participation in political and social life. Social media and other online platforms allow people to communicate, organize, and express their opinions effectively. This has a significant impact on strengthening the voice of civil society in terms of human rights enforcement, advocating social issues, and influencing public policy. Digital civilization also supports innovation and economic growth. Companies and individuals can use digital technology to create new products and services, explore business opportunities, and participate in the global economy. This creates new job opportunities and drives sustainable economic growth.

Civil society faces several significant challenges in keeping up with the rapid digital developments in the modern era. One of the main challenges is privacy and data security issues. With a plethora of personal information stored and shared online, the risk of data breaches and misuse of personal information is increasing. Civil society must continuously strive to protect their personal data and understand the importance of privacy policies and cyber security practices. Additionally, access inequality is another issue. Although digital technology has provided access to various information and services, there is still a large portion of the population that lacks equal access to the internet and related technologies. This inequality can deepen social and economic disparities, so civil society needs to work together to ensure more equitable digital access. Another challenge is the spread of misinformation and hoaxes. Social media and online platforms enable the rapid dissemination of false or misleading information. This can disrupt decision-making processes, trigger conflicts, and erode public trust. Civil society needs to be savvy consumers and participate in efforts to address these issues. Furthermore, the role and impact of digital technology in work and the economy are also important issues. Automation and robotics may replace human jobs, affecting employment opportunities and requiring changes in required skills. Civil society should be involved in discussions about the future of work and ensure that efforts are made to create inclusive economic opportunities. Lastly, challenges related to digital ethics must also be addressed. Questions about how technology should be used, including in the context of artificial intelligence and government surveillance, require careful debate and regulation. Civil society has an important role in monitoring and influencing the use of technology in ways that align with societal values and interests. In facing all of these challenges,

civil society plays a crucial role in advocating for change, collaborating with governments, the private sector, and other organizations, and raising awareness about the positive and negative impacts of the digital civilization in the modern era.

Through deeper understanding and action regarding various aspects of the digital civilization, this essay aims to encourage the empowerment of civil society in preventing lagging behind in this era. By highlighting the challenges and opportunities, this essay seeks to provide insights into how civil society can actively participate in the digital transformation, protect their rights, and ensure that the positive impacts of digital technology are felt by all layers of society (Dinata, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empowerment

The framework of community empowerment theory can be used to understand how civil society can be empowered in the digital context. This theory discusses the concepts of empowerment, capacity building, and the active role of individuals or groups in decision-making and social change. In the digital era, empowering civil society involves their ability to access information, participate in public discussions, and influence policies related to digital technology. The theory of empowerment emphasizes the importance of providing knowledge, skills, resources, and autonomy to civil society so that they can effectively participate in the digital civilization. In the digital era, empowerment includes understanding technology and digital literacy, enabling people to take control of their experiences and interactions in the virtual world. It also means providing them with the ability to understand important issues such as privacy, security, and access to information. Empowerment

theory asserts that when civil society has the necessary knowledge and tools, they can more actively participate in digital debates, influence policies, and ensure that digital technological advancements provide equal and sustainable benefits to all society, thereby reducing the potential for lagging behind in the digital civilization.

Digital Divide

This theory focuses on the digital access gap between various groups within society. Researchers can utilize this framework to understand how inequality in access to and utilization of digital technology can affect the empowerment of civil society. By comprehending the factors causing this inequality, research can identify solutions to prevent lagging behind in the digital civilization. Moreover, the theory refers to the understanding that not all individuals or groups have the same access, skills, or capacity to utilize digital technology. This theory identifies digital inequality as a serious issue within society, with some having full access and abilities to use digital technology while others are left behind. In the rapidly evolving digital era, this inequality can result in disparities in access to information, economic opportunities, and participation in social and political life. Therefore, understanding the theory of digital lag serves as an important foundation for exploring efforts to empower civil society in addressing this inequality by providing the access, skills, and support needed to engage the entire population in the continually evolving digital civilization.

Civil Participation

This theory relates to how civil society can participate in political and social processes. In the digital context, this research can explore how digital technology influences civil participation,

including through social media, online campaigns, and digital advocacy. It emphasizes the key role of civil society in the democratization process and decision-making. This theory underscores that civil society must actively engage in social, political, and economic issues that affect them. In the rapidly evolving digital era, civil participation through social media, online platforms, and non-governmental organizations allows people to participate in discussions, advocate for their interests, and monitor governments and other institutions. This contributes to the formation of more inclusive and equitable policies and ensures that the benefits of digital technology are felt evenly across all sectors of society. Therefore, the theory of civil participation serves as an important foundation for understanding how civil society can play a more active and significant role in facing the continually evolving digital civilization.

Digital Ethics Theory

This theoretical framework helps in understanding the ethical issues arising from the use of digital technology, such as privacy, data security, and surveillance. Research can explore how the understanding and application of digital ethics principles can influence the empowerment of civil society in facing the digital era. This theory refers to the moral and ethical principles that should be followed in the use and development of digital technology. It emphasizes the importance of considering the social impact, privacy, security, and human rights in every aspect of the digital civilization. In an era where technology has an increasingly significant influence on everyday life, digital ethics becomes an important guideline for civil society in ensuring that the evolving digital civilization adheres to values and principles underlying justice and social good. Therefore, digital ethics theory plays a crucial role in guiding the actions and

decisions of civil society in responsibly utilizing digital technology and contributing to the development of a sustainable and beneficial digital civilization for all (Rahmat, et al., 2019). The frameworks of these theories can help research delve deeper into analyzing the empowerment of civil society in the digital era and identifying the factors that influence their success in preventing lagging behind in the digital civilization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method used was literature study or review. Literature study can also explore various reference books and previous research results of a similar nature, which can be used to obtain theoretical foundations regarding the issues to be studied (Sarwono, 2006). According to Sugiyono, literature study was a theoretical study, references, and other scientific literature related to the culture, values, and norms that develop in the social situations being studied. Information was obtained from various institutional reports, scientific articles, websites, books, and relevant regulations. The focus of data acquisition sources was credible journal publishers.

The data collection technique in this research was documentation, which involved searching for data on things or variables in the form of notes, books, papers or articles, journals, and so on (Arikunto, 2013). After all the data had been collected, the next step was for the author to analyze the data so that conclusions can be drawn. To obtain accurate and appropriate results in analyzing the data, the author uses critical analysis techniques. Critical analysis was a perspective that stated that researchers were not free subjects when viewing research. Critical analysis generally stems from certain views or values believed by the researcher. Therefore, the researcher's bias and position on an issue determine the

text/data interpreted. Analysis was one of the author's efforts to facilitate understanding by analyzing its truthfulness through the opinions of experts, which were then extracted into the meaning and essence of these expert opinions.

DISCUSSION

The digital civilization is a phase or era in the development of society characterized by the dominance of digital technology, especially the internet, computers, and electronic devices. In the digital civilization, digital technology has become an essential element in various aspects of life, including communication, work, education, entertainment, trade, and social interaction. This has created a massive transformation in how people interact, access information, collaborate, and live their daily lives. The digital civilization also encompasses cultural and social changes related to digital technology, as well as its impacts on the economy, politics, and overall societal life.

The digital civilization has brought about significant positive impacts in various aspects of life. One of them is easier access to information. Digital technology, such as the internet, enables quick and widespread access to knowledge from around the world, facilitating learning, research, and personal development. Additionally, communication has been enhanced through social media and online communication platforms, allowing people to connect with friends and family worldwide more easily. On the economic side, the digital civilization has also created new business opportunities, including e-commerce, technology startups, and jobs in the digital industry. However, the digital civilization also has negative impacts that need attention. One of them is the issue of data privacy. With more personal information stored digitally, the risk of data breaches and misuse of personal

information increases. Cybersecurity is also a challenge, with threats such as hacking, cyberattacks, and online fraud emerging. Additionally, the digital civilization has created unequal access, with some societal groups lacking equal access to digital technology, which can deepen social and economic inequalities. Moreover, there are issues related to misinformation and hoaxes that easily spread through social media and the internet, threatening the truth and integrity of information. In facing these positive and negative impacts, it is important for society to continue understanding, managing, and responding to the changes brought about by the digital civilization wisely, through appropriate regulations, awareness of risks and individual responsibilities, and collaboration to minimize negative impacts and maximize the positive benefits of digital technology.

Civil society refers to groups or organizations within society that actively participate in public affairs and are not part of the government or military. Civil society consists of various elements such as non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, human rights activists, environmental groups, labor unions, and many more. The primary role of civil society is to monitor the government, advocate for social change, and fight for individual rights as well as important social or environmental issues. They often serve as critical voices and important watchdogs in ensuring government accountability, driving reforms, and advocating for positive changes in society.

Civil society faces a number of complex challenges in coping with the increasingly evolving digital civilization. Some of the main challenges they face include Digital Access Inequality. Despite the rapid development of digital technology, many regions in the world still lack adequate access to the internet and digital infrastructure. This challenge creates

a digital divide that can result in some communities being left behind in the benefits of the digital civilization. Although digital technology has leveled geographical boundaries, there are still many areas worldwide that lack adequate access to the internet and digital infrastructure. This creates a digital divide that affects disadvantaged communities, both in the context of developed and developing countries. This digital access inequality can significantly disadvantage civil society as they may not be able to access important information, online public services, or economic opportunities offered by digital technology. This challenge also affects their participation in ongoing political and social discussions in the online world. Therefore, civil society needs to collaborate with governments, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations to address this digital access inequality by ensuring that adequate digital infrastructure is available to all layers of society, so that no one is left behind in the continuously evolving digital civilization.

In the digital environment, the risks related to security and privacy of information are very high. Civil society needs to confront threats such as data breaches, misuse of personal information, and privacy violations that can significantly harm them. The challenges faced by civil society in coping with the digital civilization, especially regarding security and privacy, are extremely complex and diverse. Firstly, society must confront security threats such as increasingly sophisticated and dangerous cyber attacks. Attacks like personal data breaches, identity theft, and malware distribution can disrupt digital lives and even jeopardize individuals' physical safety. Additionally, society also faces privacy challenges related to the massive collection of data by technology companies and governments. The use of personal data for commercial purposes or surveillance can threaten individual privacy

and raise questions about the extent to which governments and companies should have access to personal information. Civil society needs to understand their rights regarding digital privacy, advocate for adequate regulations, and enhance digital literacy to protect themselves and society from security threats and privacy violations in this era of digital civilization.

Civil society has various opportunities in facing the increasingly developing digital civilization. There are several key opportunities held by civil society: Advocacy and Policy Influence. Civil society has significant opportunities in facing the growing digital civilization, especially through advocacy and policy influence. In the digital era, policies related to data privacy, cyber security, and internet access play a crucial role in shaping an inclusive and fair environment. Civil society can leverage its influence to urge governments and the private sector to design policies that address the needs and rights of individuals in the digital world. They can act as a voice advocating for societal interests, highlighting important issues, and collaborating with other stakeholders to create appropriate regulations and support responsible technological development. Data and evidence regarding the impact of digital policies can be highly effective tools in influencing positive changes in the digital civilization. By conducting smart and fact-based advocacy, civil society can play a vital role in shaping a future of technology that is more inclusive and secure.

Education and digital literacy are two key opportunities held by civil society in facing the increasingly developing digital civilization. Digital education provides insights and skills needed to understand technology, the internet, and digital devices more deeply. This not only helps individuals optimize the benefits of technology but also increases awareness of security and privacy challenges that may

arise in the digital environment. Additionally, digital literacy enables communities to critically evaluate information encountered on the internet, distinguish between fake news and legitimate information, and actively participate in online discussions in ways that promote healthy and respectful dialogue. By enhancing digital education and literacy, civil society can more effectively reap the benefits of this increasingly complex digital world while addressing potential risks associated with the evolving digital civilization.

Civil society also has interesting opportunities in facing the developing digital civilization through social innovation and application development. In the digital era, many social innovators have successfully utilized technology to create empowering solutions for individuals and communities. They design applications, online platforms, or information systems that address social issues such as access to education, healthcare, or poverty reduction. Real-life examples include online education applications providing interactive learning to children in remote areas or health applications providing medical information access to hard-to-reach communities. Civil society can play a role in developing, testing, and promoting such applications, as well as collaborating with social innovators to create more effective solutions in addressing social challenges in this digital era. Thus, they can contribute to the development of a more inclusive and sustainable society in the continuously evolving digital civilization.

One of the main opportunities that civil society has in facing the digital civilization is advocating for transparency and accountability. Digital technology has provided greater access for the public to monitor and evaluate the performance of governments, public institutions, and companies. Civil society can leverage data,

information, and online platforms to oversee government actions and expose issues related to corruption or human rights violations. They can scrutinize public policies and expenditures, and disseminate their findings through social media and transparency websites. This helps to enhance accountability and encourage more responsible actions from governments and related institutions. Concrete examples include websites and applications that allow the public to report corrupt behavior or engage in citizen audits to scrutinize public spending. With greater transparency, civil society can play a crucial role in combating corruption, upholding integrity, and ensuring that governments and other institutions operate in the public interest.

One significant opportunity that civil society has in facing the digital civilization is the ability to collaborate and build networks. In the interconnected digital era, civil society can easily interact and work together with various stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, businesses, government institutions, and individuals. This enables them to address social and economic issues more efficiently and innovatively. Through cross-sectoral partnerships, civil society can combine resources, knowledge, and skills to create stronger and more sustainable solutions. Concrete examples include online campaigns involving collaboration between civil society organizations and companies to address environmental or social issues. By collaborating and building networks, civil society can become more effective agents of change in shaping a more inclusive, sustainable, and fair digital civilization.

Political participation is one of the important opportunities held by civil society in facing the rapidly evolving digital civilization. In the digital era, social media and online platforms provide a broad space for individuals and civil society groups to

participate in the political process. Civil society can use these platforms to voice their political views, discuss important issues, and organize political campaigns. Data from the Pew Research Center shows that more people around the world have been using social media to influence public opinion and their political participation.

Political participation in the digital environment also includes the right to access information and engage in online elections. This allows civil society to be part of the policy-making process and to elect leaders who represent their values and aspirations. However, it is important to note that while political participation in the digital era has great potential, there are also challenges such as the spread of fake news and misinformation. Therefore, media literacy and the ability to discern accurate information are crucial for civil society to participate intelligently in this increasingly complex digital civilization. Overall, political participation in the digital era provides civil society with powerful tools to influence policies, advocate for their rights, and contribute to the development of a more democratic and inclusive society.

Civil society plays a crucial role in shaping and harnessing digital technology for the common good. With a wise approach and the right use of data, they can maximize these opportunities to build a more inclusive, fair, and sustainable society in the digital civilization.

Empowering civil society in the digital era is a process aimed at providing the knowledge, skills, resources, and access needed by individuals and groups within civil society to actively and effectively participate in the ever-evolving digital environment. There are several ways in which empowering civil society is carried out in the digital era, namely Education and Training. Education and training are among the most fundamental and effective ways to promote the empowerment of civil

society in the digital era. In this context, education refers to the provision of knowledge needed to understand digital technology, digital literacy, and an understanding of its risks and opportunities. Training involves the development of practical skills, such as cybersecurity, software usage, and wise data management. These programs should be designed for various levels of knowledge, so they can accommodate individuals with diverse backgrounds and levels of ability. Additionally, training should be easily accessible, affordable, and relevant to the latest technological developments. Through education and training, civil society can feel more confident and competent in participating in the ever-evolving digital world. They can better protect themselves from cyber threats, optimize the benefits of digital technology, and contribute to the development of a smarter society in technology usage. This is an important initial step in empowering civil society to address digital challenges in this era.

Universal internet access is a key element in the effort to empower civil society in the digital era. The internet is the primary gateway to the digital world, and ensuring that all individuals and communities have equal access is an important step in bridging the digital divide. In this context, empowering civil society includes initiatives to expand internet infrastructure to remote areas and underserved communities. Data shows that despite significant increases in internet access in many countries, there are still areas that are poorly connected. With universal internet access, civil society can utilize various online resources, including education, employment opportunities, health information, and political participation. They can access digital economic opportunities, communicate efficiently, and participate in global discussions. It also enables them to monitor and report on important social, political,

and environmental issues in this digital era. In addition to ensuring universal internet access, it is also important to make internet access affordable. High access costs can be a major barrier for some communities to harness the potential of the internet. Therefore, policies supporting affordable internet access are also a crucial part of the strategy to empower civil society in the digital era. Thus, universal internet access is not only a key aspect of empowering civil society, but also a foundation for broader and sustainable digital inclusion.

Awareness campaigns are one of the effective ways to empower civil society in facing the ever-evolving digital civilization. These campaigns aim to enhance public understanding of various digital aspects, such as digital literacy, cybersecurity, and the risks that may be encountered in the online world. Furthermore, awareness campaigns can also provide information about best practices in using digital technology. Data shows that many individuals and civil society groups are still vulnerable to cyber threats and lack an understanding of how to recognize fake news or hoaxes. Through these campaigns, the public can learn how to protect themselves online and identify unreliable content. Awareness campaigns can also help build a more discerning and responsible digital culture. Civil society can play a role in disseminating accurate and trustworthy information, as well as encouraging participation in healthy online dialogue. Campaigns of this nature can also provide ethical guidelines for online behavior and promote privacy in the open digital world. Additionally, awareness campaigns can highlight important issues, such as human rights in the digital world or the impact of technology on everyday life. By spreading awareness about these issues, civil society can influence policy changes and trigger in-depth discussions about how

technology can be used to improve quality of life and social justice. Thus, awareness campaigns are a powerful tool in empowering civil society to face the ever-evolving digital civilization.

Participation in digital decision-making is a crucial strategy in empowering civil society in the ever-evolving digital era. This refers to the process in which civil society, along with other stakeholders such as the government and private sector, participate in the formulation of policies, regulations, and actions related to digital technology. Through participation mechanisms such as public consultation forums, multi-stakeholder dialogues, or advisory panels, civil society can voice their views, provide input, and offer important perspectives in developing policies that align with their needs and aspirations. Data shows that countries practicing civil society participation in digital decision-making tend to have better regulations, more transparency, and greater consideration for individual rights in the digital world. This participation also encompasses the concept of digital democracy, where civil society can influence policies and actions related to online platforms, data privacy, cybersecurity, and other digital issues. It's not just about the right to participate but also about ensuring that digital technology is directed for the common good and meets ethical standards and human rights. By participating in digital decision-making, civil society plays a crucial role in shaping a future of technology that is fair, secure, and inclusive. Thus, participation in digital decision-making is a key way to empower civil society in facing the continually evolving digital civilization.

The use of technology for social change is a powerful strategy in empowering civil society in the digital era. This involves leveraging digital tools such as

social media, websites, apps, and online platforms to create positive changes in society. Civil society can use this technology to mobilize support, advocate for social issues, and organize relevant social actions. Real-life examples include successful online campaigns that gather signatures for petitions, raise funds for specific causes, or disseminate important information to the general public. Technology also enables civil society to raise public awareness about important issues such as climate change, human rights, or inequality. Data shows that online campaigns can have a significant impact on shaping public opinion and driving changes in policies or actions. Furthermore, digital technology allows civil society to gather and analyze relevant data, enabling them to identify issues, monitor progress, and measure the impact of social change efforts.

The use of technology for social change also includes utilizing tools such as e-learning platforms to distribute knowledge and skills to the community, as well as applications that empower individuals to address social challenges, such as health or education apps. By harnessing technology wisely, civil society can become more effective agents of change in tackling social issues and creating a more just and sustainable society in the continuously evolving digital era.

Monitoring government and corporate actions is one of the crucial ways in empowering civil society in the continuously evolving digital era. In this context, civil society plays a role as policy watchdogs and implementers in the digital world. They can use digital technology to monitor the actions of governments and corporations, as well as check their compliance with relevant laws, ethics, and standards. Through data, evidence, and collected reports, civil society can voice their concerns, identify violations, and advocate for change.

Data shows that transparency and accountability of governments and corporate actions can be enhanced through strong monitoring efforts. For example, civil society organizations can report policies that violate individual rights or actions by companies that harm the environment. They can use social media, websites, and other online platforms to disseminate information and garner support from the wider community. Additionally, civil society can collaborate with other stakeholders, including media, independent government institutions, and international organizations, to strengthen the effectiveness of monitoring.

In the continuously evolving digital era, monitoring government and corporate actions is key to ensuring that technology is used for the common good and in compliance with ethical values and human rights. Therefore, civil society serves as the frontline in upholding integrity and accountability in the digital world, making monitoring a key element in their empowerment efforts.

One important way to empower civil society in the digital era is through collaboration with the private sector. Partnerships between civil society and technology companies and other private sector entities have great potential in addressing digital challenges. In this collaboration, civil society can bring perspectives focused on human rights, ethics, and social impact, while the private sector provides resources, technical expertise, and extensive networks. Through joint initiatives, they can develop technology solutions that are more sustainable, secure, and ethical. Real-world examples include training programs funded by companies to enhance digital literacy in communities or joint initiatives to improve cybersecurity. Collaboration with the private sector can also assist civil society in developing applications or digital tools that support social goals, such as poverty

reduction, education improvement, or better healthcare access. By working together, civil society and the private sector can create strong synergies to address digital challenges and achieve more positive outcomes in the continuously evolving digital civilization. Empowering civil society in the digital era is essential to ensure that individuals and groups have control over their experiences and contributions in the increasingly complex and interconnected digital world. It also supports principles of democracy, transparency, and human rights in the rapidly evolving digital environment.

CONCLUSION

Civil society is a group of individuals and non-governmental organizations aimed at influencing policies, advocating for citizens' rights, and participating in social, political, and environmental issues independently of the government or businesses. They often act as watchdogs and advocates, contributing to building a more democratic and just society. Empowering civil society through digital education and literacy is key to bridging the gap in the increasingly developing digital civilization. In an era where digital technology affects nearly every aspect of life, understanding and using technology wisely becomes crucial. Digital education enables communities to better understand technology, while digital literacy helps them become savvy consumers and users in the digital environment. Thus, empowering civil society through digital education and literacy can help communities reap the full benefits of the digital civilization while reducing potential associated risks. It is essential to ensure that no one is left behind in the development of digital technology, so that this civilization can provide greater benefits for all members of society.

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