

Chapter 3

A Study Regarding the Perception of Digital Citizenship Among Adults and the Assessment of This Perception: A Digital Literacy Model

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ABSTRACT

Over time, as the influences of digital technologies on individuals' lives became apparent, the concept of digital citizenship as developed. Digital citizenship is considered to consist of 9 dimensions. These 9 dimensions have been previously described by Mike Ribble and his colleagues. These studies demonstrate not only the importance of effective use of digital technologies, and especially online technologies, but also the importance of ethically responsible and critical use. Over time, the concept of digital competence, which represents an integral aspect of digital citizenship, is also defined. In this study, a digital literacy model is created associated with the dimensions of digital citizenship and the aspects of digital competence. Based on this model, the perception of individuals regarding the conscious, proper and effective use of online technologies is assessed, and a comprehensive field study regarding digital citizenship is conducted.

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1. INTRODUCTION

When developing a digital literacy model, it is first necessary to evaluate the concepts of digital citizenship and digital literacy. Gilster (1997), who is the first person, establishing the concept of digital literacy, defined this concept as the ability to perceive and consider the digital world critically rather than a set of skills associated with information technologies (IT) (Gilster, 1997). Bawden (2001) further expanded Gilster's definition by adding the following components to the concept (Bawden, 2001):

- The ability to judge the information in online environments, and to judge the difference between the content of this information and the way it is actually presented.
- The ability to impartially evaluate information obtained from various different sources, and thus to form a reliable information environment.
- The ability to use the skills of search information on the Internet-based search engines.
- The ability to communicate, discuss and help other individuals in the digital world.

As summarized in his diagram shown in Figure 1, Ala-Mutka (2011) considered that digital literacy was not limited to the ability to use computers and software development, but also included the ability to search information on the Internet, to interpret this information, and to communicate with others by using digital tools. He also described the digital literacy as a concept that encompasses Internet literacy, media literacy, information technology literacy, and information literacy (Ala-Mutka, 2011). Previous of his studies, they also examine the term "social computing" which means a collaborative knowledge sharing via internet to achieve sustainable economic growth and competitive market structure (Ala-Mutka et al., 2009). From this point of view, it is possible to state that concept of digital literacy comprises the ability to recognize the opportunities, innovations, and productivity brought by information technologies; the ability to ensure the validity and reliability of information; the ability to recognize the ethical responsibilities associated with the use of information technologies; and the ability to search, collect, and process information in a critical and systematic way (Çubukcu, 2014).

As shown in Figure 1, the term of literacy in the digital world consist of a jargon jungle not easy to breach (Ferrari, 2012). In the literature, some phrases are also added with 'technology literacy' (Amiel, 2004), 'new literacies' (Coiro, et al., 2008), or 'multimodality' (Kress, 2010), 'media and information literacy' (Andretta, 2007; Bawden, 2001; Buckingham, 2003; Hartley, McWilliam, Burgess, & Banks, 2008; Horton, 1983; Knobel & Lankshear, 2010; Livingstone, 2003), 'digital literacy competence' (Ozdamar-Keskin, et al., 2015), 'digital skills and digital competence' (Søby, M., & Lyotard, J. F., 2016). Ozdamar-Keskin et al. also draw a similar line that information literacy, computer literacy, media literacy, communication literacy, visual literacy and technology literacy are sub-disciplines of digital literacy (Ozdamar-Keskin, et al., 2015). On the other hand, Gallardo-Echenique et al. specify digital terms in various ways such as digital literacy, digital competence, eLiteracy, e-Skills, eCompetence, computer literacy, and media literacy and point out that there are still no clear guidelines for evaluating these terms (Gallardo-Echenique, et al., 2015).

The instructor Dr. Mike Ribble, defining the dimensions of digital citizenship, indicated the digital literacy as one of the dimensions of digital citizenship. Mainly emphasizing the educational aspects of the concepts of digital literacy and digital citizenship, Ribble and Baily (2007) described that digital literacy included the ability to effectively use knowledge-based search skills, as well as an awareness of the means, methods, and tools employed when benefitting from technological tools for educational

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