

The Use of Blogs among Students: Shifts in Utilization, Pragmatism, and Critical Literacy

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Abstract

This article presents the findings of a study on access to and utilization of information in blogs among university students, as well as how students can cultivate critical literacy towards content and information in blogs. Through interviews with 203 students in the cities of Surabaya and Malang, this study reveals that students' frequency of accessing blogs is consistently increasing, and there is a growing pragmatism that could potentially compromise scholarly integrity within the higher education domain. For students with digital literacy and a pragmatic approach, blogs are often perceived as highly beneficial, particularly when facing tight assignment deadlines. Accessing a blog and navigating the provided links is a practical and swift method for students to locate the required references. The students know that blogs should not be used as primary references for completing academic tasks at the university. However, with critical literacy skills they possess, many students attempt to use blog information by paraphrasing and editing. Blogs owned by respected intellectuals and blog entries supported by accurate literature are regarded by students as highly valuable and reliable sources for guidance in writing and finalizing academic assignments from their lecturers.

Keywords: Blogs, University Students, Digital Literacy, Critical Literacy.

Introduction

As part of the net generation, students are expected to engage in internet-based activities actively. They develop their existence and identity within the digital environment, where they forge virtual social connections and collaboratively interact (Deopujari, Shrivastava, Joshi,

Meshram & Chaudhary, 2019; Prensky, 2001; Tapscott, 1999, 2008). As Tapscott and Williams (2010) assert, being part of the net generation entails engaging in collaborative learning and continuously building knowledge collaboratively through the internet. This has implications for the academic lives of students as part of the Internet generation. The critically minded students committed to academic integrity will naturally search for various accountable and highly credible information sources. However, for some other students, the myriad conveniences offered by the virtual realm, mainly through remarkable and nearly boundless blogs, might tempt them to take shortcuts: seeking references or information to support academic tasks via blogs, although from a scholarly standpoint, the accuracy and intellectual quality of information across various blogs may not necessarily be assured.

A study by Sugihartati (2013) revealed that the sources of information students typically utilize for compiling coursework or final assignments generally encompass not only printed materials but often electronic formats accessible to students from various online platforms. As members of the net generation, students not only engage in web browsing to access popular entertainment-related information but also recognize the ease with which scholarly references required for their academic assignments can be obtained from the online realm, particularly from blogs. The study by Sugihartati (2013) identified that although students on average, are diligent web users and tend to leverage online platforms for sourcing materials for their academic tasks, this behavior is likely driven by pragmatic considerations in pursuit of efficiency and ease in acquiring necessary information sources. For the compilation of electronic information resources, most students acknowledge frequently obtaining them from various blogs, books, and articles downloaded from blogs or other sites such as Google, which provide students with the possibility and convenience of access.

The internet and the multitude of information it offers may mean an ambivalent situation for students. On the one hand, the ease of accessing the online space allows students to explore any information they require, including scholarly materials (Morán-Reyes, 2022; Weinstein & James, 2021). On the other hand, the convenience with which students can access blogs across the online space might lead them towards a pragmatic inclination to take a shortcut: seeking information to support their assignments from various blog articles or write-ups, accomplishing this concisely. However, the extent to which the accessed content can be accountable remains open to debate (Cardenas-Navia & Fitzgerald, 2019; Morán-Reyes, 2022; Silveira, 2010; Stewart, 2023).

This article reports on the findings of a study concerning the utilization and role of blogs in developing digital literacy and how students can cultivate critical literacy through content and information presented in blogs. This research is significant for two main reasons. Firstly, recent trends suggest that the frequency of students accessing blogs is consistently increasing, and there are indications of growing pragmatism that could potentially compromise scholarly integrity within the higher education domain. Secondly, due to the ease with which students access information presented in blogs, there is a potential risk of hindering the positive role of informational development within the online realm, which encompasses scholarly content adhering to accountable scientific principles. Besides blogs, the online space contains other more verifiable scholarly information sources, such as academic journals, ebooks, and more. Generally, the research questions addressed in this study are: (1) How do students access and utilize blog information? and (2) How can students develop critical literacy toward blog content and data?

Literature Review

Amidst the advancements in information technology and the internet, the emergence of diverse blogs that present a variety of content, serving as a platform for internet users to express ideas, aspirations, creativity, and various topics, has been an intriguing phenomenon. Blogs have become easily accessible in the online space. Similar to other media phenomena, blogs have transcended barriers to interaction among individuals worldwide since the emergence of the World Wide Web. Blogs can be defined as a medium where content can be updated frequently due to the fundamental nature of web pages being editable, and readers are directed to provide comments, thereby fostering opportunities for discussion forums to flourish (Blood, 2004; Garcia, Moizer, Wilkins & Haddoud, 2019; Grimaldi, Rosa, Loureiro & Oliveira, 2020).

Mortensen, Walker, and Morrison (2002) describe blogs as a developed connection and a vessel for channeling thoughts. Blogs have evolved into journals that emphasize comments and provide links and reader responses contingent on the weblog's theme and purpose. With these characteristics, blogs are better understood as a medium through which individuals can channel diverse comments, opinions, ideas, knowledge, and creativity.

Different from when the internet had not yet reached massive development, at present, what individuals wish to convey, including the comments they express, is better described as a form of online publication. These comments can serve as methods to capture the public's attention concerning issues, thereby anticipating subsequent comments or opinions in response to the previously presented ideas. In this context, social networking built upon blogs constructs a collaborative network that holds the potential to initiate a process of information dissemination (Jordan & Weller, 2018; O'dell, 2019). Through individually generated content, blogs play an informative role and provide a platform for debate, freedom of expression, and virtual personal identity portrayal. Personal blogs also serve as a means or "vehicle" for the development of idea exchange and information sharing, facilitated through the representation of blog authors who utilize their participation to contribute information, create content, and engage in various forms of expression (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006; Ostertag, 2021).

Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz (2004) categorize the uses of blogs into five distinct categories: (1) Documenting the author's life; (2) Providing comments and opinions; (3) Expressing emotions in depth; (4) Conveying ideas through writing; and (5) Forming and managing community forums. In the postmodern societal era, blogs serve as platforms that offer opportunities to cultivate various forms of literacy rooted in digital technology, particularly digital literacy and critical literacy. This involves the vital ability to engage with content in an era where information production has escalated (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006; Corrêa & Silva, 2017; Ostertag, 2021). Digital literacy encompasses technical skills in operating computers as digital tools but also adapting to activities mediated by digital technology, including technologically-mediated social practices (Hafner, Allison, Jones & Stewart, 2012; Rajeswari & Madhavi, 2023). Thorne (2013) defines digital literacy as competence related to semiotic activities mediated by electronic media. Another definition views digital literacy in terms of mastery and operational capability, as well as evaluation and critique (Feerrar, 2019; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Tugtekin & Koc, 2020). Meanwhile, Gilster (1997) contends that digital literacy involves knowledge and methods for absorbing, evaluating, and integrating information.

On the other hand, critical literacy refers to evaluating texts from the author's perspective or the intention behind the text, the reasons for the text's composition from a particular standpoint, and specific reasons about elements related to the consumed text. At present,

alongside the characteristics of Web 2.0 and the evolving culture of participation, a critical attitude is capable of safeguarding the reader's status from a passive recipient who merely consumes the writer's ideas to essential thinkers who continually develop crucial questions about the author and text, investigating information or ideas (McLeod & Vasinda, 2008; Weng, 2023).

McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) offer a comprehensive definition of critical literacy, which refers to the ability of a reader to actively engage in the reading process and move beyond passivity to receiving textual messages with accompanying questions, testing, or associations involving the power dynamics existing between the reader and the writer. Critical literacy encompasses four aspects: (1) Critical literacy centers on power issues and emphasizes reflection, transformation, and action; (2) Critical literacy focuses on problems and their complexities; (3) Strategies of critical literacy are dynamic and adapt to the utilized context; (4) Critical literacy examines and evaluates from various perspectives.

Critical literacy aims to empower users as information consumers to foster a critical stance towards content across various media types, including blogs, thereby discerning what needs to be comprehended and believed within texts. Consequently, critically evaluating content within Web 2.0 can contribute to the enrichment of knowledge and transform users into informed producers and consumers within the global society (McLeod & Vasinda, 2008; Weng, 2023).

Materials and Methods

The current study aims to examine the utilization and role of blogs in fostering digital literacy among students and how students, as part of the net generation, develop critical literacy towards content and information within blogs. This study, as reported, is descriptive research that does not aim to test the relationship between variables but instead seeks to provide an in-depth description of the role of blogs and the development of digital literacy among students. The interviews with all respondents were conducted using a structured questionnaire, which contained answer choices. The questionnaire used in this research has been tested for the accuracy and consistency of the respondents' answers through a questionnaire trial carried out on 20 students (10 from the faculty of social sciences and ten from the faculty of natural sciences). The trial results guarantee that the measuring instruments are accurate and the respondents' answers do not change over time.

It was conducted in several private higher education institutions and public universities in Surabaya and Malang. These two major cities in the East Java Province were selected due to their role as regional educational hubs, hosting numerous public and private Higher Education Institutions. The research employed fieldwork to gather primary data directly from students at the selected higher education institutions. In this study, 203 respondents were interviewed and recruited from various higher education institutions, encompassing both public and private institutions. The respondents were selected purposively, meeting the following criteria: (1) being enrolled as students at the designated higher education institutions, (2) being in their third semester or above, (3) owning a laptop or computer, and (4) having accessed blogs at least three times in the past year to support their academic assignments from professors at their respective campuses. Based on the location of the universities, the researchers interviewed 203 students from 21 different higher education institutions in Surabaya and Malang. These students represented faculties in sciences and social sciences. The students were from 8 faculties and 74 study programs. The entire data collection process was completed within 3 months. The

research was conducted from July to September 2022.

Results

Utilization of blogs: From discussion platforms to information sources

As part of the net generation, students are generally well-acquainted with blogs, with many utilizing blogs as information sources. In the era of information development and the pervasive influence of the internet, the opportunities for students to access and leverage information in the online space, including blogs, have expanded significantly. Beyond being information consumers, many students often assume the role of information producers. They create blogs to channel aspirations and ideas and express various elements they wish to share or circulate within other cyberspace communities.

Among students who maintain blogs and those who do not, the primary purpose for accessing and utilizing blogs is predominantly for academic task references (68.5% or 139 students). When students are assigned tasks such as writing papers or undertaking take-home exams, most admit to using blogs extensively, even though they are aware that blogs are not deemed acceptable academic references. Meanwhile, 31.5% (64 students) opted for other answers regarding their detailed purposes for using a blog, which is as follows: approximately 21.7% of the respondents state that they access blogs to enhance insight or knowledge, and 5.4% of respondents acknowledge using blogs to seek comparative information from alternative sources. Some respondents (4.4%) indicate employing blogs as a gateway to locate references. Although the students also acknowledge searching for information or references directly from books or journals, the difficulty in accessing them often leads them to opt for information sourced through blogs. Several students note that the quality of information found in blogs is equal to that of journals, mainly when the bloggers are experts in their respective fields (Table 1).

Table 1

Purpose of Utilizing Academic Blogs

Purpose of Utilizing Academic Blogs	Yes	
	F	%
1. Used as academic references	139	68.5%
2. To broaden knowledge/insight	44	21.7%
3. In comparison to other information sources	11	5.4%
4. As a primary gateway to discover reference sources	9	4.4%
Total	203	100

Students only sometimes choose blogs as reference sources. They know that employing blogs as academic references constitutes an erroneous action and violates the prevailing academic norms. Students' cautious approach and reluctance to resort to blogs predominantly (51.6%) stem from their awareness of academic regulations that proscribe using blogs as reference sources. Meanwhile, 39.1% of the respondents acknowledge having realized that blogs contain non-credible information, prompting them to avoid using the content uncritically and to exercise caution in utilizing blog content (Table 2).

Table 2

Reasons for Not Using Blogs for Academic Tasks

Reasons	F	%
1. Blogs contain non-credible information	25	39,1%
2. Adherence to academic rules prohibiting the use of blogs in assignments	33	51.6%
3. Blogs violate copyright by utilizing information without proper source attribution	4	6.2%
4. Greater trust in journals and books	2	3.1%
Total	64	100%

Students often download content from blogs about course information containing theories and concepts (72.7%). This type of content is dominant, given that the intent behind students accessing various blogs is to obtain materials or references for completing assignments given by their lecturers. For students, blogs that extensively present theories and concepts constitute the most frequently sought-after content, as they can acquire theories and concepts directly for academic references without spending extra time searching for books and journals. Among the 139 responding students, 16.5% of respondents acknowledged that the blog content most commonly downloaded for reference purposes includes a substantial amount of scientific papers. In contrast, 10.8% of respondents said they often download blogs containing statistical data (Table 3).

Table 3

Downloaded Content for Reference

Content	F	%
1. Content containing theories and concepts	101	72.7%
2. Scientific papers	23	16.5%
3. Data (statistics)	15	10.8%
Total	139	100%

The students know that utilizing information from blogs as academic references cannot be scientifically justified. However, the students still use the content from blogs, which remains feasible. They will either paraphrase first (37.4%) or use the information merely as a reference before further developing their ideas (42.4%). Among the interviewed students, only 20.2% of the respondents admitted to directly taking and utilizing information from blogs for their academic assignments (Table 4). Those students who conducted direct copy-paste actions often argue that they did so due to impending assignment deadlines or because they genuinely used a pragmatic approach.

Table 4
Methods of Extracting Blog Content for Academic Reference

Cara	F	%
1. Directly taken (copy-paste) from the Blog	28	20.2%
2. Content is paraphrased before usage	52	37.4%
3. Not taken (not copy-pasted), but used as a reference for developing ideas	59	42.4%
Total	139	100%

Critical literacy

Using blogs among students has provided many benefits and is often a shortcut when facing tight assignment deadlines. However, regardless of the practical advantages of blogs, various pieces of information written by others in blogs are only partially trustworthy in terms of accuracy and validity. Out of the 203 students, 50.2% (102 students) stated that information written by others in blogs could be more trustworthy. Nevertheless, about 49.8% (101 students) of the respondents claimed they could trust information written by individuals in blogs (Table 5). Further interviews revealed that students trust information in blogs, mainly when there are references and the blog is authored by someone knowledgeable. According to the statements of several informants, their favorite blogs are often owned by well-known intellectuals that are reputable and can be relied upon for accuracy.

Blogs shouldn't be generalized. There are quality blogs out there. Just look at the authors. There are many blogs created by young people that might seem haphazard. But blogs by famous individuals are often good. I frequently access the blogs of professors from the University of Melbourne. They are active in writing for newspapers, too. The content is excellent. They upload a lot of their work. How can you say that blogs by well-known people like this are not scholarly..." stated Rhisky (19 years old), a student of a State University in Malang.

Table 5
Reasons for Trusting Information Obtained from Blogs

Reasons for Trusting Information Found in Blogs	Yes		No		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Sources and references used match those stated in the blog post	61	60.4	40	39.6	101	100
2. Considering the background of the author or owner of the blog (famous/professional individual)	47	46.5	54	53.5	101	100
3. Recommended by lecturers	12	11.9	89	88.1	101	100
4. References are provided	21	20.8	80	79.2	101	100

As this study reveals, 60.4% of the respondents acknowledged trusting the content of blogs because the sources and references used align with what is stated in the blog post. Meanwhile, 46.5% of the respondents said that they trust the content of blogs as they consider the background of the blog owner, who is perceived as either famous or a professional individual (Table 5). Blogs owned by professors or well-known figures who have authored numerous books or articles in international journals, undoubtedly become the favored blogs accessed by students. Among students who are accustomed to using blogs for academic references, they

generally have a clear understanding of which blogs consistently provide valuable academic insights and information. One student from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at Airlangga University (Unair) mentioned that they frequently access the blog of an Indonesian professor who currently teaches at Monash University Australia. For this student, the blog by the Monash University professor often proves highly beneficial for providing references for their academic assignments. Additionally, the blog contains access to books and journal articles that further enrich the academic references they require for their assignments.

Meanwhile, some students do not trust the content of blog posts primarily because they know that it constitutes plagiarism (64.7%). Furthermore, 46.1% of students hesitate to trust blog articles due to perceived reliance on unreliable references (Table 6). Not all students believe in directly copying articles they find on blogs. Articles or writings deemed low quality and lacking explicit references are typically distrusted as reliable and accountable academic information. Personal opinions expressed by blog authors are often considered by students only for comparative or supporting purposes, as they are perceived to lack the accuracy and scholarly validity.

Table 6
Reasons for Not Trusting Information in Blogs

Reasons for Not Trusting Information in Blogs	Yes		No		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Incorrect grammar and usage of vocabulary not meeting standard language norms	8	7.8	94	92.2	102	100
2. Reliance on unreliable references	47	46.1	55	53.9	102	100
3. Blogs identified as sources of information with high plagiarism	66	64.7	36	35.3	102	100
4. Academic regulations and standards of scholarly writing	24	23.5	78	76.5	102	100
5. Unclear background of the author	10	9.8	92	90.2	102	100

Among the 203 interviewed students, 70% (142) of the respondents claim that they continuously evaluate the content of blog posts. Conversely, only 30% (56 students) do not assess blog content (Table 7). This suggests that while being pragmatic, most students refrain from adopting blog content as direct references for their academic tasks haphazardly. Learning from experiences and their lecturers' warnings regarding plagiarism's consequences, many students have become aware of the necessity to critically examine blog content and subsequently utilize it for their assignments. Several students have stated that they use blog information as academic references after editing and paraphrasing the content. Furthermore, there are instances where students intentionally pursue further research beyond the references provided in blogs, which they subsequently claim as their own accessed sources. However, they have only read these references through the articles presented on the blog.

This study found that students evaluate writing in blogs mainly due to their desire to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the blogs (50.7%). Around 44.4% of respondents stated that they evaluate blogs to avoid errors from misleading information sources (Table 7). This differs from ebooks or journal articles where the scientific quality can be more assured. According to several students, articles or writings in blogs cannot be trusted for accuracy; rather, one must delve

deeper into factors like the author's credentials, the references used, and the extent of up-to-date information.

Table 7

Reasons for Evaluating Other People's Writings in Blogs

Reasons for Evaluating Other People's Writings in Blogs	Yes		No		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Ensuring the credibility of the blog to be used	72	50.7	70	49.3	142	100
2. Avoiding errors from using misleading information sources	63	44.4	79	55.6	142	100
3. As a form of appreciation	33	23.2	109	76.8	142	100
4. As a learning process to develop writing skills	32	22.5	110	77.5	142	100
5. Not in line with reality and rationality	13	9.2	129	90.8	142	100

According to the students, when finding blog posts that do not align with their understanding, the majority (78.6%) of respondents stated that they do not use the post. However, 17.9% of the respondents said they would provide criticism and respond by writing in the blog to address inaccuracies. Several students intended to write articles or responses to provide feedback and stimulate discussions. While these responses may not always be carried out with utmost seriousness, they generally expressed satisfaction in voicing their concerns.

Table 8

Reasons for Critiquing Others' Writing in Blogs

Reasons for Critiquing Others' Writing in Blogs	Yes		No		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Different perspective from the author	44	78.6	12	21.4	56	100
2. Writing addresses sensitive issues	10	17.9	46	82.1	56	100
3. Poor writing quality	11	19.6	45	80.4	56	100
4. Poor relationship with the author	3	5.4	53	94.6	56	100
5. Questionable references used	2	3.6	54	96.4	56	100

The reasons for students critiquing the writings of others in blogs primarily stem from perceiving a divergent perspective from their thoughts (78.6%). Meanwhile, 17.9% of the respondents stated that they provide feedback when the blog posts they access address sensitive issues (Table 8). As part of the younger intellectual generation, some students feel compelled, or at least enticed, to comment to contribute to the discourse. The criticisms articulated by these students are acknowledged as not reflecting their concerns seriously. In essence, regardless of their criticism or feedback, their goal is not to engage the blog owner in a debate to outwit each other but rather to share differing opinions. Furthermore, some interviewed students asserted their indifference to whether the blog owner reciprocates their responses.

This study found that 77.3% (157 students) of the students agree with using blogs as sources of information to support academic endeavors, while only 22.7% (46 students) disagree. The total of 157 students who agreed serves as the basis for the data presented in Table 9, while the 46 students who disagreed serve as the basis for the data presented in Table 10. Many students

concur that blogs can be employed as academic references, albeit not all blogs. For blogs authored by well-known intellectuals or prominent commentators recognized in mass media, several informants asserted that citing them as references is justifiable. In the view of numerous students, what matters is not whether the information they cite originates from a blog, but rather who the blog author is and the quality of the content uploaded to the blog.

Table 9

If Yes, Reasons for Agreement

If Yes. Reasons for Agreement	Yes		No		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Providing information to many people	82	52.2	75	47.8	157	100
2. Blogs serve as an easily accessible medium for information dissemination	81	51.6	76	48.4	157	100
3. Reading a single blog can yield a multitude of perspectives from various figures	22	14.0	135	86.0	157	100
4. Broadening perspectives with diverse viewpoints	62	39.5	95	60.5	157	100
5. Serving as a stepping stone for further thought	17	10.8	140	89.2	157	100

Among students who agree that blogs should be considered sources of academic information, 51.6% of the respondents state that blogs serve as easily accessible information media, and 55.2% also perceive that blogs provide valuable information to many people (Table 9). According to several students, using blogs in the era of digital society development is inevitable.

Meanwhile, for the students who disagree with using blogs as sources of information to support academic activities, the primary reasons are that blogs are perceived to lack standardized academic content (52.2%) and that the sources of information used in blogs are unclear (52.2%) (Table 10). Some idealistic students tend to avoid utilizing blogs as academic references, primarily through mere copy-pasting. These idealistic students are more satisfied producing their thoughts, even though the quality might only sometimes meet their expectations. Unfortunately, the number of such idealistic students is relatively limited. The study reveals that despite many students understanding that citing blogs is not under scholarly norms, they do not necessarily refrain. Students aware of the prohibition against citing blogs often seek ways to navigate the situation: they cite blogs as a practical shortcut while employing various paraphrasing techniques and incorporating additional elements that give the impression that they have traced the information back to the source.

Table 10

If Not, Reasons for Disagreement

If Not, Reasons for Disagreement	Yes		No		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Lack of standardization in academic content on blogs	24	52.2	22	47.8	46	100
2. Blogs lack copyright	9	19.6	37	80.4	46	100
3. Blog addresses can be easily changed	10	21.7	36	78.3	46	100

(missing link or information not found)						
4. Sources of information used in blogs are unclear	24	52.2	22	47.8	46	100
5. Not ready for citation	3	6.5	43	93.5	46	100

Discussion

The findings, which reveal students' tendency to utilize blogs as a shortcut for completing academic tasks, pose a dilemma and risk that can undermine the quality of academic life. While blogs offer students the opportunity to construct knowledge and enhance their digital literacy actively, they also entail the risk of fostering a pragmatic mentality, using blogs for direct copy-pasting and paraphrasing to meet the immediate demands of academic assignments.

In an ideal context, with blogs as interactive spaces, students, as the audience, cannot only access and consume various information presented but also become information producers. In the current era of digital society, where the information era supersedes the industrial era, media users (audiences) are no longer passive recipients but actively engage in interactive spaces - where audiences consistently have the opportunity to generate more content. As active audience members who publish, comment, and discuss, bloggers can also be described as producers who simultaneously remain users (Borowski, 2022; Delgado Asto, Ore Choque, Pecho Riveros, Soto Loza, Cordero Tataje, 2021; Tarango, Machin-Mastromatteo & Cortés-Vera, 2023). All bloggers have the potential to act as users (information recipients) while also functioning as potential producers who generate content, a concept often referred to as "produsage." Given this hybrid role, the blogosphere becomes an environment where information distribution occurs more effectively, enabling the collaborative produsage of information and knowledge (Bruns & Jacobs, 2006; Tarango et al., 2023).

For students, blogs provide a platform to express their ideas and aspirations. However, this study needs to cover concerning indications (Mirra, Morrell & Filipiak, 2018; Zou & Hyland, 2019). Supported by their digital literacy skills, students can construct multimodal texts, manipulate technology for various purposes of pleasure, and experiment with new ways of building and expressing their identities. Digital literacy here refers to practices of communication, relationship building, thinking, and other activities related to digital media (Hautemo, 2023; Purwanto et al., 2023). In today's information era, the success of young individuals, including students, is generally intertwined with their digital literacy. With the ability to use digital tools, they can avoid being left behind in the digital landscape, including social interactions. As a result, while some researchers define digital literacy solely in technical terms, others have expanded the definition to encompass evaluation and social interaction issues. For students with adequate digital literacy, they will be able to harness and access the required information. The challenge, then, is: how do students utilize their digital literacy skills? As reported in the above data findings, despite having digital literacy skills, the outcomes are only sometimes positively aligned with academic development and improvement. Practices of plagiarism and the appropriation of others' articles, followed by altering their identity under a student's name, are not isolated incidents. Among the surveyed students, dishonest practices that violate the expected intellectual integrity are unfortunately prevalent.

As previously explained, a significant proportion of students do not refrain from

participating in such practices despite understanding that referencing blogs is not considered acceptable according to academic standards. The students, aware of the prohibition against using blogs as credible sources, committed a strategic maneuver. Many students deliberately opt for paraphrasing and making necessary sentence alterations to circumvent detection through tools like Turnitin. Numerous students intentionally modify sections of sentences taken from blogs and supplement them with the required references to create the impression that they have directly traced the sources.

Given the overflow of information, students must develop skills and strategies to discern the quality, dependability, validity, purpose, and intention of the information they readily access and acquire, including that derived from blogs. Critical literacy involves assessing texts, including the author's perspective or intention, the reasons behind the text from a specific viewpoint, and the reasoning underlying components associated with the consumed text. Armed with critical literacy, students can transition from passive recipients who merely consume authors' ideas to essential thinkers who consistently generate critical inquiries about authors and texts, examining information or ideas (McLeod & Vasinda, 2008; Tarango et al., 2023). In a digital landscape marked by an extraordinary explosion or deluge of information, users needing more critical literacy are not immune to becoming entangled in a vortex of information that consists of merely hoaxes or information whose accuracy cannot be verified.

One of the prerequisites that students need to master to prevent themselves from falling victim to low-quality information or information with questionable accuracy is critical literacy. Beyond mere digital literacy, critical literacy involves evaluating texts, including understanding the author's perspective or the intent behind the text, the reasons for writing the text from a specific standpoint, and specific rationales related to the elements within the consumed text, including texts found in blogs (Hall, 2017; Johnson & Keane, 2023; Knight Dooly & Barberà, 2023; Weng, 2023). The issue is that possessing digital literacy and critical literacy skills among students does not guarantee that all of them are utilized for ideal academic purposes. What is concerning is that, despite having digital and essential literacy skills, several students use them pragmatically to expedite their educational tasks. This phenomenon indicates that the enhancement of digital literacy and critical literacy doesn't always progress in parallel with the dedication and intellectual life of the campus, which should ideally be characterized by honest production of academic work.

Conclusion

This study has found that the intensity of students accessing blogs increases, and there is even an indication of growing pragmatism that could threaten scholarly integrity within the higher education landscape. On the one hand, the presence of blogs undoubtedly assists students in seeking information to support the teaching-learning process; on the other hand, the ease with which students access information through blogs may risk hindering the positive role of information development in the online space, which should adhere to scholarly standards. Different from academic journals, ebooks, and other sources with accountable scholarly quality, information in blogs, as per established norms, cannot be used as references in scientific articles, theses, or other academic works within higher education. Nevertheless, for students possessing digital literacy skills and a pragmatic approach, blogs are often deemed highly beneficial, especially when facing tight assignment deadlines. For pragmatic students, accessing a blog and subsequently exploring the provided links is a practical and swift way to

find the necessary reference materials.

The students know that blogs should not be used as references in academic assignments. However, with their critical literacy skills, many students attempt to navigate blog information through paraphrasing and editing. Blogs owned by famous intellectuals and articles in blogs supported by accurate literature are considered highly beneficial and reliable sources of reference for writing and completing academic tasks assigned by their lecturers. While blogs offer a space for students to express aspirations and explore ideas, their presence simultaneously risks leading students into academically counterproductive behavior.

† These authors contributed equally to this work.

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