

# From Expression to Responsibility: Shaping Students' Digital Citizenship

Agustianto<sup>1\*</sup>, Ampuan Situmeang<sup>2</sup>, David Tan<sup>3</sup>, Hanifah Ghafila  
Romadona<sup>4</sup>, Windi Eka Putri<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1-6</sup>Faculty of Law, Universitas Internasional Batam, Indonesia

Email: [agustianto.lec@uib.ac.id](mailto:agustianto.lec@uib.ac.id)

## History of Article

Submitted : 2025-02-05

Revised : 2025-02-20

Accepted : 2025-03-05

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.37253/sasen.v3i1.11279>

**Copyright©2025 by Author(s).** This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License. All writings published in this journal are personal views of the authors and do not represent the views of this journal and the author's affiliated institutions.

## Abstract

This community service initiative aimed to enhance digital legal literacy among students of Senior High School 25 Batam through a legal education program on privacy, freedom of expression, and hate speech prevention. Recognizing the limited student awareness of digital laws—particularly the ITE Law—this program adopted an interactive approach involving discussions, case simulations, and contextual materials. The results demonstrated significant improvements in students' understanding of the legal boundaries of online expression and the importance of ethical digital communication. Outputs such as educational modules and infographics supported continued learning, while student engagement fostered the formation of a community committed to responsible digital citizenship. The program highlights the need for integrating legal and digital literacy into school curricula and supports the use of restorative educational methods in addressing hate speech. This model may serve as a replicable framework for other institutions seeking to promote legal awareness and healthy online behavior among youth.

**Keywords:** Digital Literacy, Freedom of Expression, ITE Law

## INTRODUCTION

Senior High School 25 Batam is a public secondary institution located in Batam City, Riau Islands Province. As an educational institution committed to quality and excellence, the school provides comprehensive facilities such as laboratories, a library, comfortable classrooms, and sports amenities. Beyond academic development, the school actively fosters students' potential through a wide range of extracurricular programs, including student organizations like OSIS and Pramuka (Wijaya, 2021). Daily school operations are well-structured, beginning with morning assemblies and followed by scheduled academic and extracurricular activities. Supported by qualified and experienced educators, Senior High School 25 Batam strives to produce graduates who are not only academically excellent but also possess strong character and global competitiveness. This dynamic and progressive school environment makes it an ideal partner for implementing legal literacy outreach programs for students (Abita et al., 2024). The institution's openness to educational innovation positions it as a strategic collaborator in addressing contemporary social and legal challenges in the digital era.

In the current digital age, students enjoy unprecedented freedom to express their opinions through social media. However, this freedom is frequently misinterpreted and may lead to harmful behaviors such as the dissemination of hate speech. Hate speech not only undermines social cohesion but also carries serious legal implications, particularly for young individuals who are often unaware of the legal boundaries governing their online behaviour (Wulan et al., 2023). Studies indicate that a majority of students are unfamiliar with the laws regulating digital expression, especially those outlined in Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law). This legal illiteracy presents a significant risk, as students may unknowingly engage in conduct that violates legal norms. Thus, there is a pressing need for preventive and educational interventions that raise awareness of digital rights and responsibilities among students. In

this context, Senior High School 25 Batam serves as an optimal venue for delivering targeted legal education through community engagement initiatives (Annisa et al., 2025).

Normatively, the ITE Law provides a legal framework intended to protect individual expression while preventing the spread of harmful content such as hate speech. However, these legal provisions have not been fully internalized by students, highlighting the disconnect between existing laws and their practical application in the student context. Ideally, students should be equipped with a foundational understanding of their digital rights and obligations (Karo, 2023). This disjunction between legal norms and real-world behavior underscores the importance of legal education as a bridge to close this gap. The implementation of an interactive and accessible legal outreach program is therefore essential to promote responsible digital citizenship among youth.

This outreach program introduces a novel approach to legal education by integrating interactive methods such as case simulations, structured discussions, and multimedia materials. Unlike traditional legal instruction, which often focuses on abstract concepts, this program aims to contextualize legal issues in the daily experiences of students. The incorporation of practical learning tools is designed to make legal content more relatable and easier to comprehend. Such an approach is expected to not only improve students' understanding but also foster a deeper sense of legal responsibility in the digital sphere (Kusumo et al., 2021). The central research question guiding this initiative is: How can legal awareness among students regarding the boundaries of freedom of expression and the prevention of hate speech be improved through legal outreach at Senior High School 25 Batam? This question underpins the program's objective of embedding legal knowledge into students' digital behaviors and attitudes.

The primary objective of this initiative is to enhance students' comprehension of the ITE Law, particularly regarding freedom of expression and hate speech. By engaging students directly through legal

education, the program seeks to cultivate awareness of the legal consequences of their actions on digital platforms. Furthermore, it aims to develop students' critical thinking skills in responding to harmful online content and encourage responsible digital communication. Nonetheless, the scope of the initiative is limited to Senior High School 25 Batam, with constraints in terms of time and participant reach. Despite these limitations, the program is expected to make a meaningful contribution by fostering legal consciousness among students. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for collaboration between legal professionals, educators, and institutions in advancing public legal education. This initiative may serve as a replicable model for other schools seeking to build a law-aware and ethically responsible student community.

## **IMPLEMENTATION METHOD**

The Community Service Program is structured in three phases: preparation (March 2025), implementation (April 2025), and evaluation (May–June 2025). The preparatory phase involves a field observation at Senior High School 25 Batam to assess institutional readiness and student characteristics. Initial discussions with school leaders help identify suitable pedagogical approaches, while interviews and questionnaires distributed to students and educators serve to assess baseline understanding of digital freedom of expression and its legal boundaries under the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law).

The implementation phase consists of a legal outreach seminar delivered to students, focusing on definitions of freedom of expression, the legal limitations defined by the ITE Law, and the implications of hate speech in both legal and social contexts. This phase includes interactive discussions and real-life case studies, as well as legal case simulations where students analyze whether sample statements on social media qualify as lawful expression or hate speech. The final phase involves a comprehensive

evaluation to measure knowledge improvement and the overall impact of the seminar.

## IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS

### Regulation of Privacy and Security in Indonesia's Digital Space

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right protected under both national and international legal instruments. In Indonesia, this right is enshrined in Article 28E(3) of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees every individual the freedom to associate, assemble, and express opinions (Marantika et al., 2025). However, the rapid advancement of information technology, particularly among students, has created new challenges in distinguishing legitimate expression from hate speech. This issue is especially relevant within the framework of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law). Supriyadi (2020) argues that freedom of expression is the cornerstone of democracy and a healthy education system, enabling students to articulate ideas openly. Likewise, Wulandari (2021) emphasizes that this freedom fosters critical thinking and encourages active participation in social and political life.

**Picture 1.** Materials



**Source:** Implementer

The law distinguishes between moral rights and economic rights, which are both vested in the author or copyright holder. Moral rights are

outlined in Article 5 and grant authors the right to be identified as the creator, to modify or withhold their name, and to preserve the integrity of their work. These rights are deeply personal, remain with the author during their lifetime, and cannot be transferred, though they may be inherited posthumously (Muhajir & Handi, 2023). The protection of moral rights ensures that creators maintain authorship and creative control even after publication. Such protection is essential in academic contexts where proper attribution is critical. Any violation of these rights constitutes an infringement of the author's personal dignity (Palandeng et al., 2024).

Hate speech, as defined by Santosa (2019), encompasses any form of communication that demeans or attacks individuals or groups based on specific identities. Under Article 28(2) of the ITE Law, hate speech is a punishable offense when it incites hatred based on ethnicity, religion, race, or societal groups (SARA). This phenomenon is frequently observed on social media platforms used by students, often without full awareness of its implications. Mulyadi and Sari (2022) found that 65% of senior high school students in Jakarta lack understanding of the ITE Law's provisions, particularly those regulating hate speech. This highlights the urgent need for early legal education to prevent students from unknowingly violating the law. Nuraini (2021) notes that many students fail to recognize when harsh, personal, or discriminatory criticism constitutes hate speech, even though constructive criticism remains permissible within ethical and legal boundaries.

### Picture 2. Materials



**Source:** Implementer

Kurniawan (2020) demonstrated that integrating digital literacy into school curricula significantly reduces hate speech among students. Teachers play a critical role as facilitators of legal and digital ethics education. Digital literacy goes beyond technical skills; it involves a deep understanding of one's legal responsibilities in digital spaces. Yuliana (2019) observed that platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter are commonly used by students to express opinions. However, the lack of self-regulation and oversight often leads these opinions to escalate into conflict-inducing speech. The illusion of anonymity and boundless freedom further complicates students' understanding of lawful expression. Notable cases involving students posting derogatory content about teachers or ethnic groups have garnered national attention. According to SAFEnet (2023), there has been a rise in student-related ITE Law violations, indicating the growing severity of this issue and the urgent need for preventive measures within the education system.

Rather than relying solely on punitive responses, educational and restorative approaches are more appropriate for students involved in hate speech cases. Puspitasari (2021) recommends prioritizing mediation and educational processes, especially in incidents involving minors, in alignment with child protection and juvenile justice principles. The rise of both digital expression and hate speech among students demands serious attention. Legal education and digital literacy must be strengthened through the school curriculum, teacher training, and parental involvement. The ITE Law should not be perceived as a tool to silence free speech but as a legal boundary that protects a healthy, inclusive, and safe public discourse for all citizens—including students.

**Regulation of Privacy and Security in Indonesia's Digital Space**

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right protected under both national and international legal instruments (Situmeang, Saefudin, Sohheng, Rusdiana, & Alhakim, 2025). In Indonesia, this right is enshrined



in Article 28E(3) of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees every individual the freedom to associate, assemble, and express opinions. However, the rapid advancement of information technology, particularly among students, has created new challenges in distinguishing legitimate expression from hate speech. This issue is especially relevant within the framework of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law). Supriyadi (2020) argues that freedom of expression is the cornerstone of democracy and a healthy education system, enabling students to articulate ideas openly. Likewise, Wulandari (2021) emphasizes that this freedom fosters critical thinking and encourages active participation in social and political life.

Hate speech, as defined by Santosa (2019), encompasses any form of communication that demeans or attacks individuals or groups based on specific identities. Under Article 28(2) of the ITE Law, hate speech is a punishable offense when it incites hatred based on ethnicity, religion, race, or societal groups (SARA). This phenomenon is frequently observed on social media platforms used by students, often without full awareness of its implications. Mulyadi and Sari (2022) found that 65% of senior high school students in Jakarta lack understanding of the ITE Law's provisions, particularly those regulating hate speech. This highlights the urgent need for early legal education to prevent students from unknowingly violating the law. Nuraini (2021) notes that many students fail to recognize when harsh, personal, or discriminatory criticism constitutes hate speech, even though constructive criticism remains permissible within ethical and legal boundaries (Oktaviani, 2024).

**Picture 3.** Team Documentation





**Source:** Implementer

Kurniawan (2020) demonstrated that integrating digital literacy into school curricula significantly reduces hate speech among students. Teachers play a critical role as facilitators of legal and digital ethics education. Digital literacy goes beyond technical skills; it involves a deep understanding of one's legal responsibilities in digital spaces. Yuliana (2019) observed that platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter are commonly used by students to express opinions. However, the lack of self-regulation and oversight often leads these opinions to escalate into conflict-inducing speech. The illusion of anonymity and boundless freedom further complicates students' understanding of lawful expression. Notable cases involving students posting derogatory content about teachers or ethnic groups have garnered national attention (Parwitasari et al., 2021). According to SAFEnet (2023), there has been a rise in student-related ITE Law violations, indicating the growing severity of this issue and the urgent need for preventive measures within the education system.

Rather than relying solely on punitive responses, educational and restorative approaches are more appropriate for students involved in hate speech cases. Puspitasari (2021) recommends prioritizing mediation and educational processes, especially in incidents involving minors, in alignment with child protection and juvenile justice principles (Rokhmawah et al., 2024). The rise of both digital expression and hate speech among students demands serious attention. Legal education and digital literacy must be strengthened through the school curriculum, teacher training, and parental involvement. The ITE Law should not be perceived as a tool to silence free speech but as a legal boundary that protects a healthy, inclusive, and safe public discourse for all citizens—including students.

Ultimately, fostering a culture of responsible digital citizenship among students requires a collaborative effort involving schools, educators, policymakers, and families. Legal understanding must be contextualized within students' daily experiences, particularly as they navigate increasingly complex digital environments. Incorporating legal and ethical dimensions into digital literacy programs empowers students not only to avoid legal pitfalls but also to become agents of positive change in their communities (Rahmawati et al., 2021). It is through continuous education, open dialogue, and accessible legal guidance that students can develop the discernment needed to exercise their freedom of expression wisely and lawfully. This preventive and developmental approach is essential in building a generation that is not only digitally competent but also legally conscious and socially responsible.

**Picture 4.** Quiz Session



**Source:** Implementer

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and the implementation of the legal outreach program, it can be concluded that students' understanding of freedom of expression and hate speech—particularly within the framework of digital law as outlined in Indonesia's ITE Law—remains limited. Through an

educational approach that included discussions, simulations, and contextually relevant materials, the outreach activity significantly enhanced students' digital legal literacy. Participants demonstrated increased awareness of the importance of ethical communication on social media and were better able to distinguish between constructive criticism and potentially unlawful hate speech. The program also produced tangible outputs, such as educational modules and infographics, which are valuable for sustaining legal education within the school environment. Moreover, it fostered the emergence of a student-led community that promotes responsible and healthy digital communication practices.

To ensure lasting impact, periodic legal education sessions on digital rights and responsibilities should be institutionalized within schools. Such initiatives are essential for reinforcing students' understanding of the legal boundaries between free speech and hate speech as stipulated in the ITE Law. The integration of legal and digital literacy into the formal education curriculum is equally crucial to provide students with a structured and continuous framework for learning about online communication ethics. Additionally, efforts to build the capacity of teachers and parents through targeted training or awareness programs are necessary so they can serve as effective mentors in guiding students through the complexities of digital interactions. The educational modules and infographics developed from this outreach should continue to be used and expanded as accessible and relevant learning resources. Finally, schools should actively support student-led digital literacy communities to enable them to play a proactive role in promoting a culture of respectful, lawful, and ethical digital engagement among their peers and within their broader social environment.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to our Supervising Lecturer for their invaluable guidance and continuous support throughout

the design and implementation of this Community Service Program. We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to Senior High School 25 Batam, especially the dedicated teachers and enthusiastic students who served as active partners in this initiative. Their openness, cooperation, and active participation greatly contributed to the successful delivery of the legal education session on digital privacy, freedom of expression, and hate speech prevention. We hope this activity brings lasting impact by strengthening students' legal awareness and fostering a culture of responsible digital citizenship. Moreover, we aspire for this program to serve as a catalyst for future collaborations aimed at promoting ethical communication and legal literacy among youth in the digital age.

## REFERENCES

- Abita, Chairini, Irwandi, dan Muhammad Amin. (2024). "Perbandingan Perlindungan Data Pribadi Antara Undang-Undang Nomor 27 Tahun 2022 Dengan Undang- Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 2024." *Limbago: Journal of Constitutional Law* 4 (2): 205–14. <https://doi.org/10.22437/limbago.v4i2.34161>.
- Annissa, F. H. N., Kusumaningsih, D., & Sudiatmi, T. (2022). Cyberbullying pada Kolom Komentar Tiktok @Denise\_Cariesta dan Implementasinya sebagai Media Pembelajaran. *Jurnal Pendidikan, Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 10(1), 49–54. [https://doi.org/10.25299/geram.2022.vol10\(1\).8618](https://doi.org/10.25299/geram.2022.vol10(1).8618)
- Situmeang, A., Saefudin, Y., Sohngeng, N., Rusdiana, S., & Alhakim, A. (2025). The Juridical Concept of 'Harm'in Digital Expression: Normative Approaches to Defining Boundaries in Indonesia and Thailand. *ADLIYA: Jurnal Hukum dan Kemanusiaan*, 19(1), 1-20. <https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/adliya/article/view/44685>
- Karo, P. P. R. (2023). Hate Speech: Penyimpangan terhadap UU ITE, Kebebasan Berpendapat dan Nilai-Nilai Keadilan Bermartabat. *Jurnal Lemhannas RI*, 10(4), 52–65. <https://doi.org/10.55960/jlri.v10i4.370>
- Kusumo, V. K., Lien, I., Junia, R., & Prianto, Y. (2021). Pengaruh UU ITE

- Terhadap Kebebasan Berekspresi Di Media Sosial Dampak positif Medsos. Seminar Nasional Hasil Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat 2021 Pengembangan Ekonomi Bangsa Melalui Inovasi Digital Hasil Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat, 1069–1078.  
<https://journal.untar.ac.id/index.php/PSENAPENMAS/article/view/15239/8759>
- Marantika, J., Salamena, F., Hukubun, R. D., & Panggabean, A. (2025). Edukasi Hak dan Kewajiban dalam Bermedia Sosial Berdasarkan UU ITE : Upaya dalam Memberikan Batasan Berekspresi di Media Sosial pada Masyarakat Desa Allang Asaude. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Bidang Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 4(1), 49–55.  
<https://doi.org/10.55123/abdisoshum.v4i1.4974>
- Muhajir, T., Efendi, S., & Hamdi, S. (2023). Pelanggaran Lalu Lintas Menurut Hukum Positif Dan Hukum Islam Di Kota Meulaboh Kabupaten Aceh Barat. *Al Ushuliy: Jurnal Mahasiswa Syariah Dan Hukum*, 2(2), 131–146.  
<https://doi.org/10.31958/alushuliy.v2i2.10539>
- Oktaviani, S. (2024). Konstitusi Dan Kebebasan Berpendapat Di Indonesia : Analisis Keterbatasan Dan Perlindungan. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Dan Manajemen*, 2(7), 1–13. DOI:  
<https://doi.org/10.61722/jiem.v2i7.1864>
- Parwitasari, A. T., Supanto, Ismunarno, Fitriono, A. R., & Budyatmojo, W. (2021). Pengaruh Media Sosial Terhadap Cyberbullying Dikalangan Remaja Di Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmu Hukum*, 15(2), 66–85.  
<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-5598-9.ch009>
- Rahmawati, N., Muslichatun, M., & Marizal, M. (2021). Kebebasan Berpendapat Terhadap Pemerintah Melalui Media Sosial Dalam Perspektif UU ITE. *Widya Pranata Hukum : Jurnal Kajian Dan Penelitian Hukum*, 3(1), 62–75.  
<https://doi.org/10.37631/widyapranata.v3i1.270>
- Rokhamah, Yana, R. P., Hernadi, A. N., Rachmawati, F., Irwanto, & Dey, H. P. N. (2024). Metode Penelitian Kualitatif. Bandung : Widina Media Utama.
- Wijaya, S. H. B. (2021). Penyuluhan Literasi Media Tentang Hoax Di Kalangan Generasi Muda Desa Juwok. *Dedikasi: Jurnal Pengabdian*

Kepada Masyarakat, 1(1), 1–10.  
<https://doi.org/10.46368/dpkm.v1i1.300>

Wulan, R., Saputra, S., & Fitriansyah, A. (2022). Sosialisasi Penyuluhan UU ITE (Undang-Undang Informasi Transaksi Elektronik) Dalam Berinteraksi Dan Komunikasi Di Media Sosial Untuk Guru Dan Karyawan Pada Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Taman Imani Iqra. Jurnal Abdimas Le Mujtamak, 2(1), 38–49.  
<https://doi.org/10.46257/jal.v2i1.409>

### **COMPETING INTERESTS**

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.