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## The Digital Citizen Between Rights and Responsibilities in the Use of Modern Information and Communication Technology

### Abstract

The use of information and communication technology requires individuals to be aware of their rights, duties, and obligations when dealing with the data of this era, which can be described as digital citizenship—especially in light of the widespread use of such technology. These technologies enable individuals to use digital tools in a safe, ethical, and legal manner, allowing them to become responsible citizens and influential contributors to society. Therefore, it is essential to introduce them to the concept of citizenship, its components and dimensions, digital citizenship, as well as digital rights and responsibilities, and digital communication. Additionally, it is important to address its significance, principles, elements, and stages.

**Keywords:** *digitization, digital citizen, information and communication technology, legal dimension, public values*

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## Müasir informasiya və kommunikasiya texnologiyalarının istifadəsində hüquq və məsuliyyətlər arasında rəqəmsal vətəndaş

### Xülasə

İnformasiya və kommunikasiya texnologiyalarının istifadəsi fərdlərdən, rəqəmsal vətəndaşlıq kimi təsvir edilə bilən bu dövrün məlumatları ilə işləyərkən, xüsusən də bu cür texnologiyanın geniş yayılması fonunda, öz hüquqlarını, vəzifələrini və öhdəliklərini bilmələrini tələb edir. Bu texnologiyalar fərdlərə rəqəmsal alətlərdən təhlükəsiz, etik və qanuni şəkildə istifadə etməyə imkan verir,

onlara məsuliyyətli vətəndaşlar və cəmiyyətə nüfuzlu töhfə verənlər olmağa şərait yaradır. Buna görə də onları vətəndaşlıq anlayışı, onun komponentləri və ölçüləri, rəqəmsal vətəndaşlıq, eləcə də rəqəmsal hüquq və vəzifələr, rəqəmsal kommunikasiya ilə tanış etmək vacibdir. Bundan əlavə, onun əhəmiyyətini, prinsiplərini, elementlərini və mərhələlərini qeyd etmək zəruridir.

**Açar sözlər:** *rəqəmsallaşma, rəqəmsal vətəndaş, informasiya və kommunikasiya texnologiyaları, hüquqi ölçü, ictimai dəyərlər*

## Introduction

Digital Citizenship is currently witnessing a tremendous revolution in technological advancement and digital information. Technology has become an essential and indispensable part of our lives, facilitating and streamlining our daily tasks and functions. The technological and informational revolution we are experiencing brings with it many advantages and disadvantages for both individuals and society. It is therefore our duty, as individuals and users of technology, to strive and cooperate in employing technology in the right ways and according to sound ethical standards, while taking into account moral and legal regulations. These considerations will help reduce the negative impacts of technology on society. For this reason, we aim to work together to promote and implement the concepts of digital citizenship, in order to advance towards a conscious and educated society.

### Research

Anyone who closely follows the developments of our time recognizes that one of the most notable phenomena of the first decade of the 21st century is the emergence of global technological services and applications that attract all segments of society. These innovations have drawn users to them for purposes such as social communication, digital marketing, and media, along with the management of social and professional life. This raises several questions: What is digital citizenship? Who is the digital citizen? What are their principles and responsibilities in the use of information and communication technology?

### 1- The Conceptual Framework of Digital Citizenship

#### 1.1 Defining the Concept of Citizenship in General and Electronic Citizenship in Particular

Linguistically, the term "citizenship" and "citizen" in Arabic are derived from the word *watan*, which refers to the place where a person resides—"the human's homeland and residence." The verb *watan* means to settle in a place (Farouk, 2013). For example, *watan al-balad* means he took the country as his homeland; *tawattana al-balad* means he settled in the country. The plural of *watan* is *awtān*. According to traditional definitions, *watan* refers to the place where a person resides and lives, regardless of whether they were born there or not (Al-Sihah, n.d.).

**Citizenship – Terminologically:** The *Collier's Encyclopedia* defines citizenship as the most complete form of membership within a political community (Siddigi, 1999). The *Global Arabic Encyclopedia* defines citizenship as a term that refers to belonging to a nation or homeland (Global, 1996). In the *Dictionary of Sociology*, citizenship is defined as a status or social relationship between a natural individual and a political community (a state), whereby the first party offers loyalty and the second provides protection. This relationship is regulated by law (Mohammed, 1995).

**Operational Definition of Citizenship:** Citizenship can be operationally defined as an individual's sense of belonging to a social group that shares a common culture, history, and destiny. This sense of belonging encompasses social, legal, and political aspects, and through it, the individual actively contributes to social life.

**Components of Citizenship:** Citizenship includes essential elements and components that must be fulfilled for citizenship to be realized. These components are:

**Belonging:** Belonging is defined as the tendency that drives an individual to join a specific social and intellectual framework, which requires commitment to the standards and rules of that

framework, as well as supporting and defending it in contrast to other social and intellectual frameworks (Najlaa, 1999).

Although the concept of social belonging is complex and ambiguous, it is considered one of the most frequently discussed concepts in contemporary sociological and educational literature. Researchers in sociology tend to define an individual's social belonging based on two complementary criteria:

**The subjective cultural factor**, which takes the form of loyalty to a specific group or belief.

**The objective factor**, which is represented by the social realities surrounding the individual—i.e., the actual belonging of the individual or group.

Loyalty represents the subjective aspect of belonging, as it reflects the highest degree of emotional and affective participation between the individual and the group to which they belong (Asaad, 2003).

### **Rights:**

These are the entitlements that all citizens should enjoy, and at the same time, they are considered obligations upon the state.

### **3-Duties:**

These are the responsibilities that a citizen must fulfill toward their country and society, and they should be carried out to the fullest extent. These duties vary from one country to another depending on their laws and philosophies.

**Community Participation:** One of the most important components of citizenship is that the citizen participates in community activities, such as volunteering.

**Public Values:** This means that the citizen should embody high morals and noble values.

**Dimensions of Citizenship** (Al-Saadi & Al-Dhahwi, 2017, pp. 22–23): Citizenship is a complex historical concept with multiple dimensions—legal, social, cultural, behavioral, political, and so on. Accordingly, we can identify these dimensions as follows:

- **Legal Dimension:** Citizenship is primarily a legal status. This status includes, first and foremost, the right to vote and be elected. It also encompasses a set of rights and freedoms that the citizen should enjoy without restrictions—except those imposed by society. Legally, citizenship refers to the relationship between the individual and the state as a geographical and political entity, defined and regulated by constitutional and legal texts. These texts are based on the principle of equality in the distribution of rights and duties among individuals, and they define the means by which rights are exercised and duties fulfilled. Citizenship is usually tied to nationality, which serves as a key criterion for identifying who is considered a citizen. Based on this, political, civil, economic, and social rights and obligations are established.

- **Social Dimension:** The identification of an individual as a citizen is rooted in their belonging to a group of individuals or citizens within a specific and officially recognized geographic area. Belonging is an attempt to shape identity and, consequently, loyalty, depending on the understanding and nature of that identity.

- **Cultural–Behavioral Dimension:** The actual practice of citizenship is closely linked to the prevailing cultural system within society. Customs, values, traditions, and social norms unconsciously facilitate the integration of individuals into social life, according to conditions set by the community. These norms also shape the definition and practice of rights and duties in everyday life.

- **Political Dimension:** Today, citizenship is more akin to a civic behavioral model and to active daily participation in community life than to a legal status tied to the granting of nationality. A good citizen is one who actively participates in public life in all its aspects. This includes the freedom to form political parties, the right to protest and hold sit-ins, and the ability to contribute to shaping the political system.

**1-2 Digital (Electronic) Citizenship:** Digital citizenship refers to an individual's interaction with others through the use of digital tools and resources, such as various forms of computers and information networks, as a means of communication with others. This includes the use of various

tools or programs such as email, blogs, and different social networking sites (Mohamed, 2014, pp. 129–147).

**Ribble** defines digital citizenship as “*a set of cultural, social, legal, and ethical issues related to digital technology, and the demonstration of personal responsibility for lifelong learning and safe leadership in digital citizenship*” (Ribble, 2016).

**Operational Definition of Digital Citizenship:** We can say that digital citizenship is a set of rules, regulations, standards, norms, ideas, and principles followed in the optimal and effective use of technology, which citizens, both young and old, need in order to contribute to the advancement of the nation. In short, digital citizenship is about guidance and protection: guidance toward the benefits of modern technologies, and protection from their dangers. Or more precisely, it is intelligent interaction with technology.

**Digital Rights and Responsibilities:** It refers to the advantages and freedoms extended to all users of information and communication technology, along with the behavioral expectations that come with it:

- Raising awareness among the generation of their rights and responsibilities when using digital technologies to achieve defined goals.
- Adhering to acceptable use policies set by the relevant authorities, digital laws, and ethical systems in the digital world, especially in the field of media and communication.
- Using digital technology responsibly and consciously to encourage creativity.
- The right of any digital citizen to own the rights to their work or to allow the free sharing of their production across the network for everyone.
- Using resources found on the electronic network ethically and legally.
- Citing the source of digital content when benefiting from it for academic honesty and protecting the rights associated with it.
- Being aware of not harming others and organizations with irresponsible behaviors and words, especially in the media, as it should be done with thoughtful and purposeful digital awareness.
- Reporting irresponsible behaviors like "threats, blackmail, and harassment" to the relevant authorities and adults, especially if they occur through social media, as they are destructive to social construction.
- Enriching digital content with valuable digital products and works, creating an informational academic space beneficial to all.
- Using modern technology to improve the real environment, develop skills, and spread awareness in various life fields.
- Raising awareness of the importance of green education and preserving the green environment by reducing digital waste and benefiting from cloud computing and digital applications on the network.
- Spreading awareness of digital ethics among network users and the positive ways to use technologies and networks.

**Digital Communication** (Digital Citizenship, 2022)

It refers to the electronic exchange of information and overlaps with several other elements of digital citizenship, such as digital access, digital behavior, rights and responsibilities, and digital security. It is manifested in the following points:

- Understanding various digital communication tools (smartphones, instant messaging, blogging, audiovisual communication).
- The conscious and responsible use of digital communication technologies, as information and communication technology is a developed resource across generations, and using it wisely increases its lifespan and reliance on it in life.
- Carefully thinking about what is sent and written via digital communication technologies (digital footprint: activities and information published by a person on the web).
- Monitoring children's communication with others using digital technologies.
- Determining the time and place for using specific digital communication technologies.

- Employing digital communication technologies, such as social networking sites, to support students' activities inside and outside the classroom, sharing ideas with others, especially in the context of distance learning, which is of immense importance for both students and teachers. It also enhances the efficiency of universities and higher education. This is because the current generation is a digital generation, and their contribution as digital citizens in developing their environment can only be achieved by supporting their education through the use of information and communication technologies that enhance their creativity and innovation in leading projects that uplift the nation and contribute to its development. The digital student is an open workshop on modern sciences only, and they must be guided by understanding the rights and responsibilities they should embody when using communication technologies to make it beneficial and supportive in their journey, which contributes to achieving both their general and specific goals.

## **2-The Importance of Digital Citizenship: Why Is It Important?** (Digital, 2022)

Just as we are citizens in the real world, we are also "citizens" as users of the digital world. Let's learn more about digital citizenship, the concepts it encompasses, and why promoting positive digital citizenship is crucial.

- We can define digital citizenship as a set of guiding principles that help instill a sense of responsibility, awareness, and wisdom when using technology, especially information and communication technology.

- It is a concept that helps us understand what technology users need to know to act consciously and wisely, contributing to the protection of the user.

- Given the constant evolution of technology, the concept of digital citizenship is not fixed; it changes and evolves continuously as well.

- A digital citizen is someone who possesses the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the digital world and use digital technologies in a positive manner. The digital citizen consumes digital content, participates, communicates, and contributes positively to the digital community.

- Just as a citizen knows right from wrong and contributes thoughtfully to their society, a digital citizen also understands right from wrong, uses technology carefully, and makes wise decisions during its use.

- The digital citizen is aware that there are serious rights and responsibilities related to the online space and accepts these conditions, which make the digital space a safer place for everyone.

There are approximately 4 billion people connected to the internet in the world, and this number continues to grow. Active internet users regularly interact through the use of various digital technologies.

- These internet users form what is known as the digital community, which provides promising opportunities in various fields, including entertainment, education, employment, and social networking.

- Our use of the internet contributes to creating a global interconnected community. Regardless of our location or identity, all our actions can significantly affect others.

- As is the case in any society, citizens are expected to act in a certain manner according to established norms, rules, and laws. Most digital citizens today feel entirely comfortable with technology, especially information and communication technology, but:

- Do they use it appropriately? Do they understand their roles and responsibilities in the digital community?

- Digital citizens can only realize the full potential of positive experiences in the online world through digital citizenship.

## **3-Principles of Digital Citizenship:** The main principles of digital citizenship are as follows:

There are many creative ways to highlight the main principles of digital citizenship. One of these methods is the Threefold Framework: Safety, Savvy, and Social Interaction (S3 Framework: Safe, Savvy, Social). This framework consists of three levels of support that digital citizens both need and provide.

- **Security:** Focuses on the importance of preventing risks and protecting oneself and others during use.

- **Wisdom:** Highlights the importance of lifelong learning, staying updated with the concepts and changes related to the digital world, and educating oneself and others to make wise decisions when using the internet.

**Social Interaction:** Centers around the importance of respecting oneself and others in the digital world, in order to build and enhance positive and cooperative social relationships among digital citizens.

**Digital Elements:** It is important to mention that the main elements of digital citizenship are as follows: Digital citizenship revolves around many aspects and key elements, and the digital citizenship elements mentioned below are among the main priorities to enhance the quality of our digital lives overall. As a digital citizen, reflect and think about every question these elements raise:

- **Health and Digital Quality of Life:** The use of technology by children and young people is a major concern for health and quality of life, especially for older generations of parents who were not born in the digital age. This is particularly problematic given the lack of control over these technologies by parents, which gives children an unhealthy space that negatively impacts their normal lives. The potential to rely on digital quality of life to enable digital citizens to benefit from technology without compromising their physical and mental health.

- **Digital Literacy:** It refers to raising awareness and educating individuals about technology and how to use it responsibly and correctly. Digital literacy can be spread to enable the positive use of technology and encourage continuous learning as technological developments persist.

- **Digital Etiquette (Digital Etiquette):** It refers to the code of conduct that defines the standards for acceptable and positive behavior in the digital community. Digital citizens can serve as positive role models for digital behavior and interaction. Both young and adult digital citizens should establish basic rules defining how we use digital technology. For example, an agreement could be made to avoid using smartphones during meals or in work meetings.

- **Digital Security:** The necessary actions to ensure a safe digital community include: Digital citizens can protect themselves online, safeguard their privacy, and reduce violations and fraud cases through specialized training in this area, learning ways to early control the causes of the mentioned risks.

- **Digital Law:** The rules, laws, and regulations that define the correct procedures, behaviors, and responsibilities, as well as the legal consequences in the digital community.

- Digital citizens can promote the adherence to good behaviors in the digital world. Just as illegal behaviors are punished in the real world, illegal behaviors online should also be reported. For example, stealing intellectual property is no less important than stealing goods from a store in a shopping mall.

**4-Stages of Developing Digital Citizenship for an Individual** (Tawilba, 2017, p. 292)  
To equip an individual with the necessary indicators of digital citizenship concepts and develop them, the individual must go through stages of digital citizenship development, as outlined in the following stages:

- **Awareness Stage:** This stage is concerned with providing students with the necessary qualifications to become literate in technological media. This means going beyond knowledge of the material and software components, as well as basic knowledge, to recognizing undesirable uses of technology.

**Guided Practice Stage:** This stage focuses on the ability to use technology in an environment that encourages risk-taking and discovery, enabling the individual to distinguish between suitable and unsuitable technological uses.

**Modeling and Providing Examples Stage:** This stage involves providing positive, ideal models on how to use technology at both home and school. The surrounding models, such as parents and teachers, serve as good role models that students can emulate when engaging with digital citizenship.

**Feedback and Behavior Analysis Stage:** In this stage, students are given opportunities to discuss their use of digital technologies within the classroom, ultimately developing the ability to

critique and distinguish the proper use of technology both inside and outside the classroom through self-reflection on their practices.

### Conclusion

Digital citizenship aims to deepen the full responsibility for written, spoken and visual statements and actions, rather than seeking to prevent the use of technology, especially information and communication technology. Preventing such use would hinder the progress and advancement of our societies and this can only be achieved through intentional education. This means equipping the younger generation with awareness and digital culture.

Given the cultural, spatial and technological openness our societies are facing and in light of the tremendous technological leap we are witnessing in our contemporary world, social media has raised many concepts and issues that have impacted the values of citizenship among individuals. Social media is characterized by many features and advantages, such as integration, participation, openness and the absence of boundaries.

The significant growth witnessed by these platforms has imposed several challenges on societies to raise awareness about the concept of citizenship among their members. Despite the numerous positive aspects of social media, there are also many negative aspects and concerns associated with it. Therefore, there is a need to benefit from and harness these platforms to instill positive principles and values among individuals, the most important of which are those based on national identity, citizenship and the role of citizens toward their country.

Based on the above, it is clear that the real solution to overcoming these problems and dealing optimally with technological tools lies primarily in equipping individuals with the appropriate values and knowledge to use them, instilling sound attitudes, fostering critical thinking skills, and establishing controls that allow them to understand the proper way to use technology.

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