

## The Threat of Ethical and Moral Changes Due to the Misuse of Digital Technology in Contemporary Society



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### A B S T R A C T

The rapid development and widespread use of digital technologies have brought about transformative changes in society, offering unprecedented benefits while simultaneously posing significant ethical and moral challenges. This qualitative study, employing a literature review methodology, explores the ethical and moral implications of digital technology misuse in contemporary society. Through a systematic analysis of 10 selected scholarly articles, this study identifies key themes such as misinformation, cyberbullying, privacy violations, and the erosion of traditional moral norms. The findings reveal that while digital technologies facilitate increased connectivity and access to information, they also contribute to the rapid spread of harmful content, undermine privacy, and challenge existing moral frameworks. The literature highlights the critical need for comprehensive ethical guidelines, digital literacy programs, and regulatory interventions to address these issues. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of embedding ethical considerations into the design of digital technologies and promoting responsible digital citizenship. Additionally, it provides recommendations for future research, including the development of ethical guidelines for emerging technologies, the evaluation of digital ethics education programs, and the need for longitudinal studies to assess the long-term societal impacts of digital misuse. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on digital ethics and offers a foundation for future studies aimed at fostering ethical behavior in the digital age.



## 1. Introduction

The rapid proliferation of digital technologies has fundamentally reshaped contemporary human life, transforming modes of communication, social interaction, economic activity, and cultural expression (Guenduez et al., 2025). Digital platforms, including social networks, multimedia applications, and algorithm-driven systems, enable unprecedented access to information and facilitate global connectivity. However, alongside these profound benefits, the misuse of digital technologies has generated significant ethical and moral challenges, threatening established norms that have long underpinned social cohesion and responsible behavior online.

Despite the transformative potential of digital technologies, scholars have increasingly documented how irresponsible use — such as the spread of misinformation, cyberbullying, privacy invasions, and manipulative algorithmic practices — undermines ethical standards and moral accountability in digital spaces (Kantha et al., 2024). Furthermore, the pervasive nature of these practices suggests that ethical norms once grounded in physical communities are being eroded or reinterpreted in ways that challenge the continuity of moral values in a highly mediated world.

Previous research has tended to address isolated facets of digital misuse, such as digital literacy (Putri et al., 2025), cyberbullying and online values (Nisa et al., 2025), or regulatory dimensions of technology ethics (Xanderina et al., 2024). While these contributions provide valuable insights into specific domains, they often lack comprehensive investigations into how digital misuse collectively affects the broader frameworks of ethics and morality across diverse social contexts. Moreover, many prior studies have focused primarily on educational or adolescent populations, leaving gaps in understanding how these phenomena manifest within adult and multicultural societies.

The research gap this study addresses lies in the absence of integrated frameworks that articulate the complex interplay between digital misuse and ethical-moral transformations in contemporary society. Existing literature offers fragmented perspectives on digital ethics without fully interrogating the structural and cultural implications of moral change at societal levels. This gap inhibits the development of robust policy recommendations, ethical guidelines, and cross-disciplinary solutions that are urgently needed in a digitally mediated era.

The urgency of this research is underscored by the accelerating rate at which digital technologies permeate everyday life, often outpacing existing ethical norms and regulatory mechanisms. In contemporary society, digital platforms influence political discourse, shape cultural narratives, and govern interpersonal interactions, all while presenting opportunities for misuse with wide-ranging consequences. These phenomena highlight the necessity for scholarly inquiry that not only maps the ethical dimensions of technology misuse but also proposes pathways for reinforcing moral resilience in digitally saturated environments.

In terms of novelty, this research integrates multiple streams of literature — including digital ethics policy analysis (Guenduez et al., 2025), sociotechnical impacts of digital interactions (Kantha et al., 2024), and digital citizenship scholarship (Putri et al., 2025) — to develop a holistic conceptual model of ethical and moral change induced by digital technology misuse. Through this interdisciplinary approach, the study contributes new theoretical insights and provides a foundation for empirical investigations in future research.

The primary objectives of this research are to: (1) analyze how the misuse of digital technologies influences ethical norms and moral values in contemporary society; (2) identify key mechanisms through which digital misuse alters moral perceptions and behavior; and (3) propose actionable strategies for strengthening ethical frameworks within digital environments. Achieving these objectives will



deepen academic understanding of how digital practices intersect with ethical constructs and inform stakeholders — including policymakers, educators, and technologists — on effective measures to address these emerging challenges.

The significance of this study extends beyond academia to practical domains where ethical integrity and moral accountability are essential. By elucidating the ethical threats posed by digital misuse and illuminating their societal ramifications, this research aims to foster more responsible digital conduct, enhance policy responsiveness, and support the cultivation of digital citizenship rooted in ethical awareness and moral responsibility.

## 2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design utilizing literature review as its primary methodological approach. Qualitative research is particularly suited for exploring complex social phenomena and understanding meanings and interpretations constructed around those phenomena in a natural context, rather than quantifying variables numerically (Lim, 2025). In the context of digital technology and ethics, qualitative studies enable a holistic understanding of how misuse impacts ethical norms and moral values within society.

The type of research conducted in this article is a literature-based study (also known as library research). Literature research involves systematically searching, collecting, reviewing, and synthesizing existing scholarly works and other credible sources to construct conceptual and theoretical insights relevant to the research problem (Snyder, 2019). Literature review as a research method is widely recognized for its ability to map the intellectual landscape of a topic area and to provide comprehensive synthesis of existing evidence that helps identify gaps and guide future research directions (Snyder, 2019; Wikipedia, n.d.-a).

Data sources for the study are secondary in nature and consist of peer-reviewed academic journals,

books, reputable research reports, and scholarly articles that address issues related to digital technology, ethics, morality, social behavior, and the consequences of technological misuse. Relevant digital libraries and academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore, and ScienceDirect were systematically searched using pre-defined keywords like “digital ethics”, “moral values digital technology”, “technology misuse society”, “ethics and digital platforms”, and related terms. These sources provide rich and credible data necessary to develop an in-depth narrative about the ethical threats posed by digital technology misuse.

The data collection process involved several sequential steps. First, a problem formulation and research question were developed to guide the literature search. Next, systematic keyword searches were executed across selected online databases to locate relevant existing works. Each identified source was then screened for relevance by examining abstracts, keywords, and conclusions. Only sources directly relevant to the research topic were retained for deeper review. This approach aligns with best practices in qualitative literature research where critical evaluation and selection of sources enhances the rigor of synthesis (Cahyono et al., 2019; Ferdiansah, 2025).

Following data collection, data analysis was conducted through qualitative content analysis and thematic synthesis. Content analysis enables identification of recurrent themes, concepts, meanings, and relationships within the literature, which together inform the conceptual framework of the research topic. Thematic synthesis involved grouping similar ideas into categories such as ethical implications, moral shifts, social consequences, and regulatory responses, and then interpreting how these themes interrelate with the overarching phenomenon of digital technology misuse. Such qualitative analysis helps to build explanatory insights rather than mere descriptions, which is essential for understanding the socio-ethical dimensions of the research problem (Paré & Kitsiou, n.d.; Wikipedia, n.d.-a).



Overall, this methodological approach allows the study to rigorously investigate the ethical and moral aspects of digital technology misuse by synthesizing diverse scholarly perspectives and evidence. It also ensures that the findings are comprehensive, conceptually grounded, and capable of informing both academic discourse and practical policy formulation in the digital ethics domain.

### 3. Result and Discussion

Here is the table containing the literature findings from the selected articles that were reviewed in this research. These 10 articles were chosen from a broader selection of related works, which were systematically screened for relevance and quality. The table includes the author(s) and year, the title of each study, and the key findings from each publication.

**Table 1.** Literature Findings

No	Author & Year	Title	Findings
1	(Guenduez et al., 2025)	Digital ethics: Global trends and divergent paths	Discusses the evolving global trends in digital ethics, emphasizing the role of technological practices in shaping moral values and societal norms.
2	(Kantha et al., 2024)	Ethics in the digital era: Technology's role in shaping society	Explores the ethical consequences of emerging technologies and provides insight into how digital platforms influence public opinion and social behavior.
3	(Putri et al., 2025)	Digital citizenship in the 21st century	Provides an in-depth look at digital citizenship, focusing on the responsibilities of individuals in the digital age and the implications for moral decision-making.
4	(Xanderina et al., 2024)	Peran etika dalam pencegahan penyalahgunaan teknologi	Analyzes the role of ethics in preventing the misuse of technology, with a particular focus on how ethical frameworks can guide digital behaviors.
5	(Nisa et al., 2025)	Kajian kualitatif tentang tantangan etika digital dalam dunia pendidikan	Examines the ethical challenges faced in educational settings as technology becomes more pervasive, highlighting issues of privacy and responsibility.
6	(Lim, 2025)	What is qualitative research? An overview and guidelines	Offers a broad overview of qualitative research methodologies, with a focus on literature review techniques as an essential research tool.
7	(Chukwuere, 2023)	Exploring literature review methodologies in information systems research: A comparative study	The study explores various methodologies for conducting literature reviews within the context of information systems research. It offers a comparative analysis of these methodologies, highlighting their differences and how they are applied in academic research.
8	(Snyder, 2019)	Literature review as a research methodology	Explores the methods and processes for conducting literature reviews, outlining best practices for ensuring a comprehensive and rigorous review process.
9	(Paré & Kitsiou, n.d.)	Handbook of eHealth Evaluation: An Evidence-based Approach. Chapter 9 Methods for Literature Reviews	Describes various methods used in literature reviews, providing practical steps for conducting thorough research.
10	(Cahyono et al., 2019)	Literatur review; Panduan penulisan dan penyusunan	Focuses on guidelines for writing literature reviews, covering strategies for structuring and presenting a clear and coherent review of the literature.



## Interpretation of Data

The findings from the selected literature in this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the ethical and moral implications of digital technology misuse in contemporary society. As reflected in the table, the reviewed works cover a wide range of topics, from the global trends in digital ethics to the specific challenges posed by technological advancements in various social contexts.

Guenduez et al (2025) provides a macro-level analysis of digital ethics, highlighting the global trends that influence ethical decision-making across societies. This perspective emphasizes how digital platforms, with their pervasive nature, contribute to the shaping of moral values in ways that often challenge traditional ethical frameworks. Similarly, Kantha et al. (2024) delves into the consequences of emerging technologies, exploring how digital platforms can manipulate public opinion and social behavior, underscoring the need for ethical scrutiny of digital tools used for mass communication.

Putri et al (2025) broadens the discussion by focusing on digital citizenship, particularly the responsibility of individuals in the digital age. This study highlights the importance of fostering ethical awareness and moral decision-making in online spaces, where users' actions have far-reaching social consequences. Xanderina (2024) further explores the preventive role of ethics in the misuse of technology, specifically emphasizing the necessity of ethical guidelines to govern digital behaviors and mitigate harmful impacts.

In educational settings, Nisa et al (2025) identifies unique ethical challenges that arise as technology becomes more integrated into teaching and learning. The study notes concerns around privacy, data security, and the responsibility of educators and students in safeguarding ethical standards in digital environments. Lim (2025), in his discussion on qualitative research methodologies, emphasizes the

value of literature reviews in mapping out the existing body of knowledge, facilitating a deeper understanding of the ethical dynamics associated with technology use.

Additionally, works by Chukwuere (2023) and Snyder (2019) provide methodological insights into literature review techniques, which were critical in structuring this research. These studies guide the systematic collection and analysis of scholarly works, ensuring that this study's synthesis of ethical concerns in digital technology is both rigorous and comprehensive. The study by Paré, G., & Kitsiou, S. adds further depth to the research methodology, offering practical guidance on how to conduct literature reviews effectively, which was essential for evaluating and interpreting the articles included in this review.

Lastly, Cahyono (2019) offers essential guidelines for writing literature reviews, which was crucial in organizing the findings from the selected articles and ensuring clarity and coherence in the presentation of the results. The collective insights from these works provide a holistic view of the ethical and moral challenges posed by the misuse of digital technologies, emphasizing the need for integrated frameworks that address these issues at both the individual and societal levels.

Overall, the data reveals that the ethical concerns surrounding digital technology are multi-faceted and interconnected. From individual responsibility in digital spaces to broader societal implications, these findings underscore the urgency of developing more robust ethical frameworks and policies to govern the use of digital technologies in ways that protect and uphold moral values.

## Discussion and Analysis

The findings from the literature review in this study reveal that the misuse of digital technology has significant ethical and moral implications for



contemporary society. Several key themes identified in the reviewed literature align with real-world phenomena such as the proliferation of misinformation, cyberbullying, privacy violations, and the erosion of traditional moral norms. These issues not only reflect contemporary social challenges but also support existing theoretical frameworks in digital ethics and social change.

First, the literature highlights how digital platforms facilitate widespread dissemination of information that can be both empowering and harmful. Research by Guenduez shows that digital ethics policies vary across countries, yet all acknowledge the critical need for ethical governance in technology use — particularly in areas like responsible development, digital rights, and ethical governance (Guenduez et al., 2025). This reflects global concerns over issues like misinformation and algorithmic bias, phenomena that have become increasingly visible in the past decade. For example, misinformation campaigns and disinformation attacks pose threats to political stability and public trust, as noted in previous empirical work on social media dynamics (Santi & Sazali, 2025).

These patterns are consistent with observable social behaviors today, where misinformation spreads rapidly through social networks, often outpacing efforts to counter it. The ethical implications of this trend relate closely to “big data ethics,” where the collection and use of personal data raise challenging questions about consent, autonomy, and transparency (Wikipedia, 2019). In turn, phenomena such as the filter bubble effect illustrate how algorithmic personalization can isolate users within biased informational silos, thus impairing critical thinking and reducing exposure to diverse perspectives — ultimately affecting moral reasoning in online spaces.

Another dominant theme is social harm associated with cyberbullying, a form of digital misuse that erodes moral norms of empathy and respect. Empirical evidence from independent studies indicates that cyberbullying contributes to

psychological trauma and, in extreme cases, suicide, emphasizing the real harm of unethical online behavior (Ridwanulloh, 2025). These phenomena directly reflect findings in the literature review, where scholars such as Putri et al (2025) and Nisa et al (2025) point to the moral responsibility of digital citizens and the challenges of maintaining ethical communication in online contexts. Together, these works illustrate that digital misuse is not just a technological concern but a social and moral crisis that intersects with issues of mental health, social cohesion, and cultural norms.

The ethical challenges extend beyond interpersonal harm to include privacy violations and data exploitation, which are increasingly scrutinized in academic discourse. Ethical concerns about data misuse have been documented in research on privacy policies and digital ethics frameworks, highlighting the need for informed consent, transparency, and respect for user rights (Hanlon & Jones, 2023). This aligns with broader theoretical discussions in digital ethics, where scholars argue that normative frameworks must adapt to address modern information flows and technological capabilities (Dhirani et al., 2023).

The reviewed literature also emphasizes the importance of education and ethical awareness as part of a proactive response to digital misuse. Studies on digital ethics education show that increasing digital literacy correlates with more responsible online behaviors (Xanderina et al., 2024) and reduces negative outcomes like misinformation spread and cyberbullying. Contemporary educational initiatives — such as citizenship and ethics coursework — support this view by demonstrating that ethical competence helps individuals navigate the digital environment more responsibly (Destiny et al., 2025).

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings intersect with concepts in value sensitive design, which argue that technological development should consciously incorporate human values throughout the design process to mitigate harm and uphold moral principles



(Wikipedia, n.d.-b). This theory supports the notion that ethical considerations must be embedded not only in user behavior but also in technological design and governance mechanisms.

Author Commentary: Based on the synthesis of these findings and their alignment with observable trends, it is evident that the digital landscape continues to challenge traditional ethical frameworks. The convergence of misinformation, privacy concerns, and harmful social behaviors such as cyberbullying suggests that current ethical norms are insufficient to address the complexities of digital interactions. As such, there is an urgent need for multifaceted strategies that combine education, regulation, and ethical technology design to promote moral resilience in digital societies. This further highlights that ethics in the digital age is not merely about compliance with rules but requires a deeper cultural shift in how individuals and institutions approach technology use.

#### 4. Conclusion

This literature review highlights the significant ethical and moral challenges posed by the misuse of digital technology in contemporary society. The findings reveal that while digital technologies provide immense benefits, they also introduce complex issues related to misinformation, privacy violations, cyberbullying, and the erosion of traditional moral norms. The reviewed studies collectively emphasize the urgent need for effective ethical frameworks to address these challenges, particularly within the realms of digital governance, education, and technology design. The research underscores the importance of integrating ethical considerations into digital technologies and fostering digital citizenship through enhanced ethical awareness and responsible usage. As digital platforms continue to evolve, it is clear that the moral implications of their misuse will continue to grow, necessitating a proactive approach to managing these ethical dilemmas.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on the development of comprehensive ethical guidelines that can be

universally applied across various digital platforms to mitigate harm and promote responsible usage. Additionally, further studies could explore the role of emerging technologies (such as artificial intelligence and blockchain) in reshaping digital ethics and moral values. There is also a need for empirical investigations that examine the effectiveness of current ethical education programs in fostering responsible behavior among users, especially in different cultural contexts. Furthermore, research should assess how policy interventions and technological innovations can be combined to protect privacy, ensure transparency, and combat misinformation. Finally, longitudinal studies are recommended to track the evolving relationship between digital technology misuse and moral change over time, providing deeper insights into the long-term societal impacts of digital platforms.

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