

Digital Citizenship and Historical Thinking Skills Among Junior High School Students: Basis for Inclusive Social Science Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Amid the growing influence of digital platforms on how young learners access, interpret, and share information, this investigation focused on digital citizenship and historical thinking skills among junior high school students at Dappat Integrated School in the City of Ilagan, Isabela, as a basis for inclusive social science instruction. It was anchored on the need to prepare learners who could participate responsibly in online spaces while critically analyzing historical sources, perspectives, and evidence. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed. The respondent's study was the total population of junior high school students. Data were gathered using a validated researcher-made questionnaire and were analyzed through frequency counts, percentages, weighted mean, standard

deviation, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. Results revealed that the respondents demonstrated a high level of digital citizenship and a high level of historical thinking skills. Respectful online participation emerged as the strongest dimension of digital citizenship, while critical evaluation of online information obtained the lowest rating. For historical thinking skills, interpretation and perspective-taking received the highest mean, whereas source analysis recorded the lowest. The correlation test showed a significant moderate positive relationship between digital citizenship and historical thinking skills, suggesting that learners who practiced more responsible and reflective digital behavior also tended to demonstrate stronger historical reasoning. The findings indicated that both competencies could be strengthened together through inclusive social science instruction. The study recommended scaffolded, evidence-based, and digitally responsive teaching strategies that would help diverse learners become responsible digital citizens and critical interpreters of historical information.

Keywords: *play-based learning, foundational numeracy, guided play, elementary pupils, mathematics learning*

INTRODUCTION

Education in the present century is no longer concerned only with helping learners remember content. It is increasingly expected to develop students who can think critically, act responsibly, and participate meaningfully in both physical and digital communities. In this context, schools are not only places where academic knowledge is transmitted, but also institutions where young people are prepared to navigate a complex information environment shaped by technology, media, and rapid social change. UNESCO emphasized that digital citizenship education has become essential in developing informed,

engaged, and responsible citizens, especially in a world where learners constantly encounter digital content, social platforms, and networked forms of participation (UNESCO, 2026). Likewise, the Council of Europe explained that digital citizenship extends beyond simple internet safety and involves values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding that enable young people to participate responsibly in democratic culture online and offline (Council of Europe, 2019).

The growing relevance of digital citizenship in education is closely tied to the nature of literacy in the digital age. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development noted that literacy in contemporary society is not merely about accessing information, but about constructing and validating knowledge in environments where misinformation, manipulation, and weak source judgment can easily shape what learners believe (OECD, 2021a). This concern is especially important for adolescents, whose digital practices are often formed through everyday exposure to social media, video platforms, online discussions, and algorithm-driven content. UNESCO's regional analysis in the Asia-Pacific further observed that many students develop a large portion of their digital citizenship competencies outside school through self-directed experiences, although teachers remain crucial in guiding students to use technology safely, effectively, and reflectively (UNESCO, 2023). These insights suggest that formal schooling must do more than permit technology use. It must intentionally cultivate responsible digital behavior, critical engagement with information, and ethical participation in online spaces (Webster, 2025).

At the same time, the digital environment has made the teaching of history and social science more demanding and more necessary. Young learners are now exposed to historical claims, political commentary, edited images, viral narratives, and simplified accounts of the past long before these are carefully discussed in the classroom. Because of this, historical thinking skills have become increasingly important. Historical thinking does not simply involve memorizing dates, events, and names. Rather, it requires students to examine evidence, analyze causation, recognize context, compare perspectives, and judge the credibility of sources. Studies on historical thinking show that these skills are closely related to students' capacity to work with multiple documents, interpret competing claims, and construct reasoned conclusions about the past (Merkt et al., 2017). In the same direction, Huijgen et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of historical contextualization as a teachable competency, while Ofianto et al. (2022) demonstrated that historical thinking can be organized into assessable dimensions such as cause-and-consequence analysis.

This means that digital citizenship and historical thinking skills are not isolated concerns. In many ways, they intersect. A student who engages responsibly in digital spaces must also learn how to question information, verify claims, identify bias, and recognize how narratives are shaped by perspective and context. These are also central habits of historical thinking. Recent scholarship on digital citizenship has defined it as encompassing the behaviors and dispositions involved in participating in digital spaces, including civic engagement, media use, and ethical conduct (Webster, 2025). In parallel, scholarship on history education has argued that historical thinking is one of the central educational challenges of contemporary schooling because learners must be taught not only what to know about the past, but how knowledge about the past is constructed, interpreted, and contested (Thorp, 2020). When these two areas are brought together, social science instruction becomes a powerful space for helping students become critical readers of both history and digital life.

The importance of addressing these competencies in school is also supported by evidence that structured educational efforts can improve important aspects of students' digital readiness. In a cluster randomized trial on youth digital citizenship education, Jones et al. (2023) found support for gains in students' knowledge of online safety concepts and their self-efficacy in handling online problems. While such findings also show that digital citizenship programs still need clearer goals and broader evaluation, they reinforce the idea that schools can shape how students understand and respond to digital environments. Similarly, work in social studies education continues to stress inquiry, evidence evaluation, and reasoned judgment as core learner outcomes. These are indispensable in a time when students encounter distorted historical narratives, misinformation, and emotionally persuasive but weakly supported online content.

Thus, the need to examine students' digital citizenship alongside their historical thinking skills is both timely and educationally significant (Jones et al., 2023; Ofianto et al., 2022).

Another important dimension of the present study is its orientation toward inclusive social science instruction. Inclusive education is now understood not only as access to schooling, but as a broader commitment to learner well-being, self-worth, belonging, and the opportunity to reach one's full potential (Mezzanotte, 2022). In the Philippine basic education context, recent policy directions have also emphasized learner-centered and inclusive education as needs-based, rights-based, and responsive to learner diversity (Department of Education, 2024). This suggests that social science teaching should not be limited to content transmission for high-performing learners alone. It should be designed so that students with varied experiences, abilities, interests, and cultural backgrounds can meaningfully participate in inquiry, discussion, and interpretation. An inclusive classroom in social science is one where learners are taught how to access information, question narratives, interpret sources, and express evidence-based understanding in ways that acknowledge diversity and promote participation.

For junior high school students, this issue is especially relevant. Adolescence is a formative stage in which students build identity, values, judgment, and social awareness while also increasing their exposure to digital environments. During these years, they begin to encounter more complex social issues, more contested interpretations of history, and more opportunities to participate in public conversations through digital platforms. If these learners are not guided to become responsible digital citizens and thoughtful interpreters of the past, they may become vulnerable to misinformation, shallow historical understanding, online intolerance, or passive consumption of unverified content. On the other hand, when schools intentionally cultivate these competencies, learners are better positioned to become reflective, informed, and inclusive participants in society (UNESCO, 2023; UNESCO, 2025; OECD, 2021a).

In the context of Dappat Integrated School in the City of Ilagan, Isabela, the study was grounded on the view that social science instruction must respond to the realities of contemporary learners. It is no longer sufficient to teach historical facts without strengthening the interpretive habits needed to assess evidence and context. In the same way, it is no longer enough to let students use digital tools without helping them develop responsibility, discernment, and ethical participation. Examining the level of digital citizenship and historical thinking skills among junior high school students may therefore provide meaningful evidence for designing more inclusive social science instruction. By understanding how these competencies are manifested among learners, the study may serve as a basis for instructional approaches that are more responsive to the demands of the digital age, the goals of history education, and the need for inclusive classroom practice.

Literature Review

Digital Citizenship as a Contemporary Educational Construct

Digital citizenship has become one of the most important concepts in contemporary education because students now learn, communicate, express opinions, and encounter public issues within digital environments. In current scholarship and policy work, digital citizenship is no longer treated as a narrow matter of online safety alone. It is understood more broadly as the responsible, ethical, critical, and participatory use of digital technologies in everyday life. The Council of Europe framed digital citizenship as a multidimensional set of competences that allows young people to live together as equals in democratic societies, both online and offline, while UNESCO emphasized that digital citizenship competencies are increasingly essential for helping learners navigate complex digital realities with resilience and responsibility (Council of Europe, 2019; UNESCO, 2023).

This broad view is significant for schools because many students interact with technology constantly, yet frequent technology use does not automatically result in critical judgment or ethical digital behavior. OECD explained that students' access to digital technologies and training in how to use them still

vary considerably, and that education must strengthen learners' ability to navigate the modern information environment rather than assume such competence already exists (OECD, 2021). In the school setting, this means digital citizenship must be intentionally taught as part of student formation, especially in subjects that involve evidence, interpretation, communication, and civic understanding.

Core Dimensions of Digital Citizenship Among Learners

The literature presents digital citizenship as a construct with several overlapping dimensions. The Council of Europe's framework identifies ten digital citizenship domains and emphasizes that students need more than technical ability. They also need critical understanding, ethical awareness, participation skills, and dispositions that support respectful interaction and democratic engagement. This framing is especially relevant in basic education because adolescents are still forming their habits of expression, judgment, and online conduct. When schools teach digital citizenship in this wider sense, they help learners become not only competent users of technology but also reflective and responsible members of digital communities (Council of Europe, 2019).

A particularly important strand in recent literature concerns the moral dimension of students' online behavior. Harrison and Polizzi (2022) argued that digital citizenship education should not be reduced to rules and restrictions, because adolescents' online choices are also shaped by moral reasoning, character, and judgment. Their work showed that young people's responses to online incivility involve ethical considerations that schools should address directly. This makes digital citizenship highly relevant to junior high school students, who are at a developmental stage where identity, peer interaction, and moral decision-making are becoming more complex. In this sense, digital citizenship education is not only about avoiding harm. It is also about cultivating character, responsibility, and thoughtful participation in digital spaces (Harrison & Polizzi, 2022).

Historical Thinking Skills in Social Science Education

Historical thinking skills have emerged in modern history and social science education as a response to the limitations of rote memorization. Rather than viewing history as a static collection of facts, contemporary scholarship treats it as a discipline that requires learners to ask questions, interpret evidence, situate events in context, and build reasoned explanations about the past. Thorp and Persson (2020) described historical thinking as central to the challenge of history education because students must learn not only historical content but also how historical knowledge is formed, interpreted, and discussed. This perspective makes historical thinking an essential intellectual goal in social science instruction, particularly for junior high school learners who are beginning to encounter more complex narratives and contested interpretations of the past (Thorp & Persson, 2020).

The literature also shows that historical thinking is made up of teachable and observable processes. Van Boxtel and van Drie (2018) explained that historical reasoning involves using sources, asking historical questions, contextualizing events, constructing arguments, and employing substantive and procedural knowledge. In this view, students do not simply learn history by receiving information. They learn it by engaging in disciplined reasoning about the past. Such a framework is highly useful in school-based research because it clarifies that historical thinking can be examined through concrete classroom indicators such as source use, contextualization, explanation, and evidence-based interpretation (van Boxtel & van Drie, 2018).

Historical Contextualization and Source Evaluation

Two of the most emphasized components of historical thinking in recent literature are historical contextualization and source evaluation. Huijgen, Holthuis, van Boxtel, and van de Grift (2019) described historical contextualization as the process of placing people, actions, and events within the time-bound conditions in which they occurred. This skill prevents students from making oversimplified judgments

about the past based only on present-day assumptions. It also encourages deeper understanding by asking learners to consider the beliefs, constraints, and realities of a particular historical moment. For social science instruction, this is important because students often encounter historical issues through fragments of information and need structured support to interpret them more thoughtfully (Huijgen et al., 2019).

Another closely related skill is the evaluation of the trustworthiness of historical sources. Van der Eem, van Drie, Brand-Gruwel, and van Boxtel (2023) found that students still struggle when they are required to judge whether historical sources are trustworthy and useful as evidence. Their study emphasized that source evaluation draws on procedural knowledge and on students' appreciation of the value of the task itself. The article also reaffirmed the importance of heuristics such as sourcing, contextualization, and corroboration. This literature is highly relevant to the present study because students in the digital age are frequently exposed to claims about history through online posts, short-form videos, and simplified narratives. Their ability to judge credibility is therefore not only a history skill but also a civic and digital necessity (van der Eem et al., 2023).

The Digital Environment and the Development of Historical Thinking

The literature increasingly suggests that digital environments have changed the conditions under which historical understanding develops. OECD noted that modern literacy requires learners to navigate an information-rich environment where access alone is not enough and where knowledge must be constructed through critical reading and evaluation (OECD, 2021). This is especially relevant for social science classrooms because students now meet historical claims in digital spaces that often privilege speed, emotional appeal, and shareability over evidence and complexity. As a result, the teaching of history can no longer be separated from the broader challenge of helping students assess information critically in digital contexts.

This relationship between digital environments and historical reasoning is further reflected in studies on source-based and document-based instruction. Merkt, Werner, and Wagner (2017) linked historical thinking with students' performance on multiple-document tasks, showing that work with several sources is central to disciplined historical understanding. More recently, Reisman and Jay (2024) showed that document-based history instruction, supported by teacher coaching, can strengthen classroom discourse and inquiry-based engagement around historical evidence. Together, these works suggest that historical thinking grows when students are asked to interpret, compare, and discuss sources rather than simply receive conclusions. For junior high school learners, this means that digital citizenship and historical thinking intersect around a common need: the capacity to question, verify, and reason with information responsibly (Merkt et al., 2017; Reisman & Jay, 2024).

Inclusive Social Science Instruction

Inclusive instruction in contemporary education is not limited to placing diverse learners in the same classroom. It involves designing teaching in ways that allow varied learners to participate meaningfully, feel valued, and access learning opportunities that support their academic and personal development. OECD explained that inclusive education responds to the academic, social, and emotional dimensions of learner diversity and also addresses the broader costs of exclusion for both individuals and society (Mezzanotte, 2022). In the Philippine context, DepEd's current policy language also emphasizes that learner-centered and inclusive education is rights-based and responsive to learner needs, which reinforces the importance of designing classroom instruction that genuinely includes varied learners rather than merely accommodating them in form (Department of Education, 2024; Mezzanotte, 2022).

Applied to social science, inclusion means that students should have equitable opportunities to engage in inquiry, evidence analysis, discussion, interpretation, and civic reflection. However, literature suggests that social studies and history instruction have not always been sufficiently prepared for this challenge. Lucas and Passe (2017) found that many social studies methods textbooks still provided

inadequate information for helping teachers support students with disabilities in social studies classrooms. This finding is important because it indicates that inclusive social science instruction cannot be assumed. It must be intentionally developed through pedagogy, materials, and teacher preparation. In relation to the present study, inclusive social science instruction means creating learning experiences where junior high school students with varied abilities and backgrounds can participate in understanding digital issues, evaluating historical claims, and constructing evidence-based insights (Lucas & Passe, 2017).

Digital Citizenship and Historical Thinking as a Basis for Inclusive Social Science Instruction

The reviewed literature suggests that digital citizenship and historical thinking skills are conceptually distinct but educationally interconnected. Digital citizenship requires learners to behave responsibly, think critically, and participate ethically in digital environments. Historical thinking requires learners to interpret sources, evaluate trustworthiness, understand context, and form reasoned conclusions about the past. Both areas depend on judgment, reflection, evidence use, and the ability to question information instead of accepting it passively. In this sense, social science instruction becomes a natural space where these competencies can be cultivated together, especially because contemporary civic life increasingly unfolds through digital media and public narratives about history (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2021; van der Eem et al., 2023).

For junior high school students, this connection is particularly significant. At this stage, learners are becoming more active users of technology while also beginning to encounter more demanding social science content. An inclusive social science classroom must therefore do more than present information. It must help all learners, regardless of background or ability, participate in evaluating sources, understanding context, discussing issues respectfully, and forming responsible views about society and history. Grounded in the literature, the present study gains its relevance from the need to examine how digital citizenship and historical thinking skills are manifested among junior high school students and how these may serve as a basis for developing more inclusive social science instruction at Dappat Integrated School in the City of Ilagan, Isabela (Department of Education, 2024; UNESCO, 2026).

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was used to determine the level of digital citizenship and the level of historical thinking skills among junior high school students. It allowed the study to generate a clear picture of how students manifested responsible digital behavior, critical use of online information, ethical participation in digital spaces, and key historical thinking abilities such as source analysis, contextual understanding, interpretation, and evidence-based reasoning.

The correlational component was utilized to examine whether a meaningful relationship existed between digital citizenship and historical thinking skills. This design was considered appropriate because the study did not seek to manipulate variables, but rather to understand how the two naturally occurred and interacted within the school setting. In addition, the findings were used as an empirical basis for proposing inclusive social science instructional directions suited to the learning realities of junior high school students.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Dappat Integrated School located in the City of Ilagan, Isabela. The school served learners from diverse backgrounds and offered a relevant setting for examining how junior high school students developed digital citizenship and historical thinking skills within classroom and technology-related learning experiences. The locale was considered suitable for the study because social

science instruction at the junior high school level increasingly required students to interact with digital information while also making sense of historical content, sources, and perspectives. The school environment therefore provided a meaningful context for investigating the relationship between the two variables and for identifying instructional implications for inclusive social science teaching.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants of the study were the total population of junior high school students enrolled at Dappat Integrated School during the school year in which the study was conducted. They were drawn from Grades 7, 8, 9, and 10, since these grade levels were exposed to social science instruction and were at a developmental stage where digital engagement and analytical reasoning could already be meaningfully assessed.

A total population sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents. This meant that all eligible junior high school students from Grades 7 to 10 were included in the study, provided that they met the inclusion criteria and were available during the conduct of data gathering. This technique was considered appropriate because the target population was manageable and accessible within the school setting. It also allowed the study to obtain a more complete representation of the junior high school learners' digital citizenship and historical thinking skills without excluding any qualified group from the population.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered through a structured survey questionnaire composed of three major parts. The first part obtained the basic profile of the respondents in terms of relevant demographic and school-related variables deemed necessary by the researcher. The second part measured the students' level of digital citizenship. This section included indicators related to responsible technology use, online respect and participation, critical evaluation of digital information, awareness of digital rights and responsibilities, and safe online behavior. The third part measured historical thinking skills. This section contained statements that reflected students' ability to interpret historical events, examine sources, identify bias or perspective, recognize historical context, and draw supported conclusions from available evidence.

The instrument was developed through the researcher's review of related literature and was refined using concepts drawn from recognized frameworks on digital citizenship and historical thinking. To ensure content adequacy, the questionnaire was submitted to experts in educational research and social science education for validation. Their suggestions were incorporated to improve clarity, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study. A pilot test was then conducted among a small group of students outside the actual sample to determine internal consistency and comprehensibility. After refinement, the final instrument was administered using a five-point Likert scale, where higher scores reflected stronger manifestation of the measured indicators.

Data Gathering

Before the actual conduct of the study, the researcher sought formal permission from the appropriate school authorities to administer the instrument. Once approval was granted, the researcher coordinated with school personnel for the schedule and orderly distribution of the questionnaires. The purpose of the study was explained clearly to the participants, and they were informed that their responses would be used solely for academic and research purposes.

During the administration phase, the questionnaires were distributed to the selected respondents in an organized manner. Clear instructions were given to help the students understand how to answer each part of the instrument. The researcher ensured that the respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaire and that any concerns regarding the instructions were clarified without influencing their answers. After retrieval, the accomplished instruments were checked for completeness, coded systematically, and prepared for statistical treatment.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the respondents were tabulated, encoded, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. To describe the level of digital citizenship and historical thinking skills, frequency counts, percentages, weighted mean, and standard deviation were used. These measures provided a general description of the respondents' responses and the degree to which each variable was manifested.

To determine the relationship between digital citizenship and historical thinking skills, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was utilized. This statistical treatment was considered appropriate because it measured the strength and direction of the relationship between the two continuous variables. If needed to enrich the instructional implications of the findings, the researcher also examined the patterns shown by the indicator means in order to identify which areas required stronger inclusive support in social science instruction. All statistical interpretations were anchored on the level of significance set for the study.

Ethical Consideration

The study observed ethical standards throughout the research process. Participation of the respondents was made **voluntary**, and no student was forced or pressured to take part in the study. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the nature and purpose of the study were explained in language appropriate to the respondents' level of understanding. Consent procedures were observed through coordination with school authorities and adherence to school protocols involving student participation in research.

Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. The names of the respondents were not written on the questionnaire, and the information gathered was treated with care and used only for scholarly purposes. The researcher also ensured that the instrument contained no item that would intentionally harm, embarrass, or discriminate against any participant. All collected data were handled responsibly, stored securely, and interpreted honestly to preserve the integrity of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. *Level of digital citizenship among junior high school students in terms of responsible technology use*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I used digital devices for school-related tasks in a responsible manner.	4.12	0.71	High
2. I followed school rules when using gadgets and internet resources.	4.18	0.69	High
3. I managed my time well when using technology for learning.	3.79	0.82	High
4. I avoided using digital tools for harmful or inappropriate purposes.	4.09	0.74	High
5. I used digital platforms in ways that supported my academic responsibilities.	4.06	0.73	High
Overall Mean	4.05	0.74	High

Scale: 4.21 to 5.00, Very High; 3.41 to 4.20, High; 2.61 to 3.40, Moderate; 1.81 to 2.60, Low; 1.00 to 1.80, Very Low.

The results showed that the junior high school students manifested a high level of digital citizenship in terms of responsible technology use, with an overall mean of 4.05. This suggested that the respondents generally used digital devices and online platforms in ways that were aligned with school expectations and learning responsibilities. The highest mean of 4.18 was obtained by the indicator on following school rules when using gadgets and internet resources, indicating that rule awareness and compliance were strongly evident among the learners. This pattern implied that students were not merely exposed to digital tools, but had also developed a basic sense of appropriate and acceptable technology use within the school context.

Meanwhile, the lowest mean of 3.79 was noted in time management when using technology for learning. Although still interpreted as high, this result indicated that managing screen time and maintaining

focus during academic use of technology remained a weaker area compared with other indicators. This may reflect the everyday reality of adolescent learners who often move between educational and non-educational uses of digital devices. The overall pattern suggested that students had already formed responsible habits in technology use, yet still needed structured guidance in self-regulation and purposeful digital engagement. For inclusive social science instruction, this implied the need for teaching approaches that not only integrate digital tools, but also help learners manage them wisely and meaningfully in relation to academic tasks.

Table 2. *Level of digital citizenship among junior high school students in terms of critical evaluation of online information*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I checked whether online information came from a trustworthy source.	3.88	0.77	High
2. I compared information from different websites before believing it.	3.74	0.81	High
3. I questioned information online when it seemed biased or misleading.	3.81	0.79	High
4. I tried to verify facts before sharing digital content.	3.92	0.76	High
5. I recognized that not all online information was accurate.	4.15	0.68	High
Overall Mean	3.90	0.76	High

Scale: 4.21 to 5.00, Very High; 3.41 to 4.20, High; 2.61 to 3.40, Moderate; 1.81 to 2.60, Low; 1.00 to 1.80, Very Low.

The findings revealed that the respondents demonstrated a high level of digital citizenship in terms of critical evaluation of online information, as shown by the overall mean of 3.90. This indicated that the students were generally aware that digital information should not be accepted at face value and that online content needed to be assessed before it was believed or shared. The highest mean of 4.15 for recognizing that not all online information was accurate showed that the learners possessed a healthy degree of skepticism toward digital content. This was a positive sign, especially in the context of social science instruction where students often encounter historical claims, interpretations, and opinions online.

However, the relatively lower mean of 3.74 for comparing information from different websites suggested that while students were aware of the need for caution, they were less consistent in practicing deeper verification behaviors. This implied that recognition of misinformation was stronger than the actual habit of cross-checking sources. Such a result pointed to an important instructional opportunity. Social science classes could build on this existing awareness by teaching students how to compare sources, examine authorship, identify bias, and verify claims more systematically. The result supported the idea that digital citizenship education becomes more meaningful when connected to subject-specific inquiry, particularly in areas where evidence and interpretation are central.

Table 3. *Level of digital citizenship among junior high school students in terms of respectful online participation*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I communicated respectfully with others in online spaces.	4.11	0.70	High
2. I avoided posting comments that could hurt or embarrass others.	4.20	0.67	High
3. I respected different opinions during online discussions.	3.95	0.75	High
4. I thought carefully before posting or reacting online.	3.86	0.79	High
5. I understood that my online behavior could affect other people.	4.17	0.69	High
Overall Mean	4.06	0.72	High

Scale: 4.21 to 5.00, Very High; 3.41 to 4.20, High; 2.61 to 3.40, Moderate; 1.81 to 2.60, Low; 1.00 to 1.80, Very Low.

Table 3 showed that the respondents had a high level of digital citizenship in terms of respectful online participation, with an overall mean of 4.06. This meant that the students generally displayed awareness of proper online conduct and understood the social consequences of their digital actions. The highest mean of 4.20 for avoiding hurtful or embarrassing comments suggested that online respect was a strong area among the learners. This was an encouraging result because respectful digital interaction supports safer and more inclusive participation in online learning communities.

The indicator with the lowest mean, 3.86, referred to thinking carefully before posting or reacting online. Although this remained within the high range, it suggested that impulse control in online interaction was somewhat less established than basic respectfulness. This distinction is important. Students may know what respectful behavior looks like, yet still respond quickly in digital environments without fully reflecting on the impact of their words or reactions. In relation to inclusive social science instruction, this finding highlighted the value of building reflective discussion practices, especially when classes deal with historical issues, controversial topics, or differing viewpoints. Learners should not only be taught to participate, but also to pause, think, and engage responsibly.

Table 4. *Level of digital citizenship among junior high school students in terms of digital safety and responsibility*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I protected my personal information when using online platforms.	4.09	0.73	High
2. I used strong passwords or secure practices in my accounts.	3.83	0.84	High
3. I knew the risks of talking to strangers online.	4.24	0.65	Very High
4. I reported or avoided suspicious online content or activity.	3.87	0.80	High
5. I understood that digital actions carried responsibilities and consequences.	4.18	0.68	High
Overall Mean	4.04	0.74	High

Scale: 4.21 to 5.00, Very High; 3.41 to 4.20, High; 2.61 to 3.40, Moderate; 1.81 to 2.60, Low; 1.00 to 1.80, Very Low.

The results indicated a high level of digital citizenship in terms of digital safety and responsibility, with an overall mean of 4.04. This showed that the respondents generally understood that online engagement involved not only freedom of access, but also caution, protection, and accountability. The highest mean of 4.24 on awareness of the risks of talking to strangers online suggested that safety-related warnings had been strongly internalized by the students. This may have been influenced by repeated reminders from school, family, and media about common digital risks faced by young users.

On the other hand, the indicator on using strong passwords or secure account practices obtained the lowest mean of 3.83. While still high, this result suggested that safety awareness was stronger at the general level than at the level of specific security habits. In other words, students appeared to understand online risks, but may not have consistently translated that awareness into concrete protective practices. For instruction, this meant that digital citizenship should not stop at general reminders. It should also include practical digital routines that students can apply in their daily academic and personal use of technology. In inclusive social science instruction, digital safety supports equitable participation because learners are more likely to engage confidently in digital tasks when they feel protected and informed.

Table 5. *Summary table on the level of digital citizenship among junior high school students*

Dimensions of Digital Citizenship	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Responsible technology use	4.05	0.74	High
Critical evaluation of online information	3.90	0.76	High
Respectful online participation	4.06	0.72	High
Digital safety and responsibility	4.04	0.74	High

Dimensions of Digital Citizenship	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Grand Mean	4.01	0.74	High

Scale: 4.21 to 5.00, Very High; 3.41 to 4.20, High; 2.61 to 3.40, Moderate; 1.81 to 2.60, Low; 1.00 to 1.80, Very Low.

The summary results showed that the junior high school students had an overall high level of digital citizenship, with a grand mean of 4.01. Among the four dimensions, respectful online participation ranked first with a mean of 4.06, followed closely by responsible technology use at 4.05, digital safety and responsibility at 4.04, and critical evaluation of online information at 3.90. These results suggested that the students were generally capable of functioning responsibly in digital spaces, especially in terms of conduct, compliance, and awareness of online consequences.

At the same time, the comparatively lower mean for critical evaluation of online information pointed to a more specific developmental need. The students appeared to be more confident in behaving properly online than in assessing the truthfulness and quality of online content. This distinction is highly significant in a social science setting, since students regularly encounter digital information related to history, current events, public issues, and opinion-based narratives. The result implied that digital citizenship education in the school context should move beyond behavioral regulation and place stronger emphasis on critical digital literacy, source scrutiny, and information judgment.

Table 6. *Level of historical thinking skills among junior high school students in terms of source analysis*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I examined who created a historical source before trusting it.	3.71	0.82	High
2. I looked for evidence when reading historical accounts.	3.84	0.79	High
3. I noticed differences between primary and secondary sources.	3.66	0.83	High
4. I tried to identify whether a source showed bias or point of view.	3.79	0.80	High
5. I used information from sources carefully before drawing conclusions.	3.88	0.77	High
Overall Mean	3.78	0.80	High

Scale: 4.21 to 5.00, Very High; 3.41 to 4.20, High; 2.61 to 3.40, Moderate; 1.81 to 2.60, Low; 1.00 to 1.80, Very Low.

The respondents showed a high level of historical thinking skills in terms of source analysis, with an overall mean of 3.78. This indicated that the students generally demonstrated awareness that historical understanding should be grounded on evidence and that sources needed to be examined rather than accepted immediately. The highest mean of 3.88 for using source information carefully before drawing conclusions suggested that students were able, at least at a basic level, to connect source reading with reasoned judgment.

However, the lowest mean of 3.66 for noticing differences between primary and secondary sources suggested that the more technical aspects of source work were less firmly developed. This implied that while students could engage with evidence in a general way, they may still have needed clearer instruction on source classification, authorship, origin, and function. In social science teaching, these areas are highly important because source analysis is foundational to both historical understanding and information literacy. The result suggested that students could benefit from more guided practice in working with different types of historical materials, especially in ways that make source distinctions meaningful and accessible.

Table 7. *Level of historical thinking skills among junior high school students in terms of contextual understanding*

Indicators	Mean SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I tried to understand historical events based on the conditions of their time.	3.94 0.75	High
2. I considered the beliefs and experiences of people in the past.	3.86 0.78	High
3. I avoided judging the past only by present-day standards.	3.69 0.83	High
4. I connected historical events to their social and cultural setting.	3.91 0.76	High
5. I recognized that different periods had different realities and values.	4.02 0.72	High
Overall Mean	3.88 0.77	High

Scale: 4.21 to 5.00, Very High; 3.41 to 4.20, High; 2.61 to 3.40, Moderate; 1.81 to 2.60, Low; 1.00 to 1.80, Very Low.

The findings revealed a high level of historical thinking skills in terms of contextual understanding, with an overall mean of 3.88. This suggested that the students were generally able to appreciate that historical events and actions had to be interpreted within the realities of their time. The highest mean of 4.02 for recognizing that different periods had different realities and values indicated that the respondents had a fairly developed awareness of historical context as a basic principle in understanding the past.

Still, the lower mean of 3.69 for avoiding present-day judgment showed that contextual understanding remained challenging when learners were asked to suspend present assumptions and think from the perspective of another era. This is a common difficulty in historical learning because students naturally interpret events through contemporary beliefs and experiences. The result underscored the need for social science instruction that helps learners enter historical situations more thoughtfully through contextual clues, narratives, inquiry tasks, and comparative discussion. In an inclusive classroom, such support becomes even more necessary because learners differ in how easily they grasp abstract historical perspective-taking.

Table 8. *Level of historical thinking skills among junior high school students in terms of interpretation and perspective-taking*

Indicators	Mean SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I understood that people could interpret the same historical event differently.	4.01 0.72	High
2. I listened to different viewpoints when discussing history.	3.97 0.74	High
3. I recognized that historical accounts could reflect the perspective of the writer.	3.89 0.78	High
4. I tried to explain why people in history acted the way they did.	3.82 0.79	High
5. I accepted that history involved interpretation, not only fixed facts.	3.95 0.75	High
Overall Mean	3.93 0.76	High

Scale: 4.21 to 5.00, Very High; 3.41 to 4.20, High; 2.61 to 3.40, Moderate; 1.81 to 2.60, Low; 1.00 to 1.80, Very Low.

The data showed that the respondents had a high level of historical thinking skills in terms of interpretation and perspective-taking, with an overall mean of 3.93. This result indicated that the students generally understood that history involved multiple viewpoints and that accounts of the past were shaped by interpretation. The highest mean of 4.01 for understanding that the same historical event could be interpreted differently suggested openness to complexity and a willingness to move beyond a single, fixed narrative.

Meanwhile, the lowest mean of 3.82 for explaining why people in history acted the way they did pointed to the more demanding nature of historical empathy and perspective-taking. Recognizing that multiple perspectives exist is one thing, but explaining historical actions within their own context requires deeper reasoning. This result suggested that the students were already receptive to interpretive thinking but

still needed support in developing more nuanced historical explanations. In inclusive social science instruction, such support could be provided through scaffolded questioning, guided comparison, story-based history teaching, and collaborative interpretation of historical cases.

Table 9. *Level of historical thinking skills among junior high school students in terms of evidence-based reasoning*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I supported my historical answers with evidence from sources or lessons.	3.76	0.81	High
2. I explained my ideas in history using facts, examples, or documents.	3.81	0.79	High
3. I checked whether my conclusion matched the evidence available.	3.73	0.82	High
4. I avoided giving answers based only on opinion.	3.68	0.84	High
5. I understood that good historical conclusions should be supported by proof.	4.00	0.72	High
Overall Mean	3.80	0.80	High

Scale: 4.21 to 5.00, Very High; 3.41 to 4.20, High; 2.61 to 3.40, Moderate; 1.81 to 2.60, Low; 1.00 to 1.80, Very Low.

Table 9 indicated that the students manifested a high level of historical thinking skills in terms of evidence-based reasoning, with an overall mean of 3.80. This meant that the learners generally recognized the importance of grounding historical statements in proof rather than relying on unsupported opinion. The highest mean of 4.00 for understanding that historical conclusions should be supported by proof suggested that the principle of evidence had already been internalized by many of the respondents.

Nevertheless, the lowest mean of 3.68 for avoiding answers based only on opinion showed that applying this principle consistently may still have been difficult. Students may know that evidence matters, yet still fall back on intuition or unsupported interpretation when constructing responses. This result implied that evidence-based reasoning needed more repeated classroom practice, especially through activities that require learners to justify answers with sources, examples, and documentation. Such instructional support would be valuable not only for historical understanding, but also for broader academic reasoning and responsible participation in public discourse.

Table 10. *Summary table on the level of historical thinking skills among junior high school students*

Dimensions of Historical Thinking Skills	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Source analysis	3.78	0.80	High
Contextual understanding	3.88	0.77	High
Interpretation and perspective-taking	3.93	0.76	High
Evidence-based reasoning	3.80	0.80	High
Grand Mean	3.85	0.78	High

Scale: 4.21 to 5.00, Very High; 3.41 to 4.20, High; 2.61 to 3.40, Moderate; 1.81 to 2.60, Low; 1.00 to 1.80, Very Low.

The summary table showed that the respondents had an overall high level of historical thinking skills, with a grand mean of 3.85. Among the dimensions, interpretation and perspective-taking obtained the highest mean of 3.93, followed by contextual understanding at 3.88, evidence-based reasoning at 3.80, and source analysis at 3.78. These findings suggested that the learners were generally capable of engaging with history as something that required thinking, interpretation, and contextual reflection, rather than mere recall of facts.

However, the dimensions with relatively lower means, especially source analysis and evidence-based reasoning, pointed to the parts of historical thinking that were more demanding for students. These results implied that while learners could appreciate that history involved interpretation and multiple viewpoints, they still needed stronger support in the more procedural tasks of analyzing documents,

classifying sources, and using proof to justify conclusions. This pattern is highly relevant to instruction because it identifies where classroom interventions may be most useful. Inclusive social science teaching must therefore not only invite students to share ideas, but also equip them with accessible strategies for handling sources and supporting claims.

Table 11. *Test of relationship between digital citizenship and historical thinking skills among junior high school students*

Variables	Computed r-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Digital Citizenship and Historical Thinking Skills	0.63	0.000	Reject the null hypothesis	Significant moderate positive relationship

The correlation analysis revealed a significant moderate positive relationship between digital citizenship and historical thinking skills, as indicated by an r-value of 0.63 and a p-value of 0.000. This meant that students who demonstrated stronger digital citizenship also tended to show stronger historical thinking skills. The result suggested that the two variables were meaningfully connected and moved in the same direction. As students became more responsible, critical, and reflective in digital environments, they also appeared more capable of analyzing sources, understanding context, considering perspective, and reasoning from evidence in history-related tasks.

This relationship was theoretically and educationally meaningful. Digital citizenship involves critical engagement with information, awareness of responsibility, and reflective participation in digital spaces. Historical thinking likewise requires learners to question claims, examine evidence, evaluate reliability, and construct reasoned interpretations. The significant relationship between the two suggested that both competencies may draw from related habits of mind, particularly discernment, reflection, and analytical judgment. For the school context, the result implied that strengthening digital citizenship may also support the development of historical thinking, especially when both are taught in integrated and context-sensitive ways through social science instruction.

Table 12. *Proposed basis for inclusive social science instruction based on the findings of the study*

Area Identified from Findings	Evidence from Results	Instructional Basis	Proposed Inclusive Direction
Critical evaluation of online information was the weakest domain in digital citizenship	Lowest digital citizenship mean at 3.90	Students needed stronger guidance in verifying and comparing digital information	Integrate source-checking routines, website comparison tasks, and guided misinformation analysis in social science classes
Source analysis was the weakest domain in historical thinking	Lowest historical thinking mean at 3.78	Students needed more support in identifying and interpreting historical sources	Use scaffolded source analysis worksheets, visual source prompts, and structured document-based activities
Evidence-based reasoning remained less developed than interpretive openness	Mean of 3.80, lower than perspective-taking and contextual understanding	Students needed help in connecting conclusions to proof	Require claim-evidence explanation tasks, historical reasoning frames, and supported writing activities
Both variables were significantly related	$r = 0.63, p = 0.000$	Digital literacy and historical reasoning could be developed together	Design integrated lessons where digital citizenship tasks and historical inquiry tasks were combined
Students generally showed high levels in both variables	Grand means of 4.01 and 3.85	Existing student strengths could be used as instructional entry points	Build inclusive activities that begin with familiar digital experiences and gradually deepen into historical analysis

The final table summarized how the major results of the study served as a basis for inclusive social science instruction. The findings did not merely describe student levels. They also pointed to practical directions for classroom improvement. The students already showed high levels of digital citizenship and historical thinking skills, which meant that instruction could build on existing strengths rather than starting from zero. At the same time, the relatively lower means in critical evaluation of online information, source analysis, and evidence-based reasoning showed the areas that needed the greatest instructional attention.

These findings suggested that inclusive social science instruction should combine accessibility, structure, and relevance. Students should be given opportunities to analyze real or simulated digital content, compare sources, detect bias, and construct interpretations using historical evidence. Because learners differ in readiness and confidence, the activities should be scaffolded through visuals, guided questions, collaborative tasks, and differentiated supports. In this way, the study pointed toward a model of social science teaching that was not only content-rich, but also responsive to learner diversity and to the demands of digital-age citizenship.

CONCLUSION

The junior high school students at Dappat Integrated School in the City of Ilagan, Isabela generally demonstrated high levels of digital citizenship and historical thinking skills, which indicated that they already possessed a meaningful foundation for responsible digital engagement and thoughtful understanding of historical content. However, the results also showed that their skills were stronger in respectful online participation, responsible technology use, contextual understanding, and perspective-taking than in critical evaluation of online information, source analysis, and evidence-based reasoning. The significant positive relationship between digital citizenship and historical thinking skills further suggested that these two competencies were meaningfully connected and could be strengthened together through well-designed instruction. Based on these findings, it was recommended that social science teachers adopt more inclusive instructional practices that integrate digital source evaluation, document-based historical inquiry, guided comparison of online and historical sources, and structured evidence-based discussion tasks. It was also recommended that classroom activities be scaffolded through differentiated questioning, collaborative analysis, visual prompts, and contextualized tasks so that learners with varying abilities and learning needs could participate more actively and meaningfully. In this way, inclusive social science instruction may become more responsive to the realities of digital-age learners while also deepening their historical understanding and critical civic readiness.

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