



Digital Globalization and Legal Culture: Online Rights Awareness and Civic Participation

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore how digital globalization shapes online rights awareness and civic participation among adult social media users in Tehran. This qualitative study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with 24 participants living in Tehran, Iran. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to include diverse experiences of digital media use, online legal information-seeking, and civic engagement. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached at the twenty-second interview, and two additional interviews were conducted to confirm the stability of the emerging categories. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed through thematic analysis with the support of NVivo software. Coding proceeded through open coding, category development, constant comparison, and interpretive refinement. Credibility was strengthened through member checking, peer review, prolonged engagement with the data, and maintaining an audit trail. Four main categories emerged from the analysis: digital legal consciousness, platform-mediated rights learning, cautious civic participation, and structural barriers to digital citizenship. Participants described digital spaces as important sources of legal knowledge, particularly regarding privacy, consumer rights, women's rights, labor rights, and administrative procedures. However, online rights awareness was often fragmented, emotionally driven, and dependent on trust in informal networks. Civic participation included signing petitions, sharing legal information, joining online campaigns, commenting on public issues, and contacting institutions digitally. At the same time, fear of surveillance, misinformation, low institutional trust, and unequal digital literacy restricted more active participation. Digital globalization has transformed legal culture by expanding access to rights-related information and creating new forms of civic participation. Nevertheless, online legal awareness does not automatically lead to empowered citizenship. Effective digital citizenship requires trustworthy legal information, civic education, privacy protection, and institutional responsiveness.

Keywords: Digital globalization; legal culture; online rights awareness; civic participation; digital citizenship; legal consciousness; Tehran.

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Introduction

Digital globalization has transformed the relationship between individuals, law, and civic life. In contemporary societies, legal culture is no longer shaped only through courts, schools, legal professionals, family norms, or state institutions. It is also formed through digital platforms, online news, social networks, messaging applications, search engines, and transnational flows

of information. As digital technologies connect individuals across national borders, people encounter new vocabularies of rights, justice, privacy, participation, accountability, and citizenship. This development has created a new field of inquiry at the intersection of legal culture, digital citizenship, and civic participation. The central issue is not only whether people have access to the internet, but how they interpret legal norms, understand their rights, and participate in civic life through digital environments.

Legal culture refers to the values, attitudes, expectations, and everyday practices through which people understand law and legality. Classic socio-legal scholarship emphasizes that law is not experienced only as a formal system of rules, but also as a cultural and social phenomenon embedded in everyday life. Legal consciousness studies show that individuals interpret law through lived experience, social relations, institutional encounters, and cultural narratives (Ewick & Silbey, 1998; Merry, 1990). In digital societies, these interpretations increasingly occur in online spaces. A person may first learn about privacy rights from an Instagram post, consumer protection from a Telegram channel, labor rights from an online discussion group, or civic obligations from a digital campaign. Thus, digital platforms have become informal sites of legal socialization.

The expansion of digital media has also changed the conditions of citizenship. Digital citizenship is commonly understood as the capacity to participate responsibly, critically, and effectively in online and offline communities through digital technologies (Council of Europe, 2022; Mossberger et al., 2008). This concept includes access to digital infrastructure, digital literacy, online safety, ethical communication, awareness of rights and responsibilities, and civic participation. The Council of Europe defines digital citizenship as active, continuous, and responsible participation in communities through competent engagement with digital technologies. Similarly, UNESCO has emphasized that digital citizenship education should help learners navigate digital environments critically, safely, and responsibly while participating in social and civic life (UNESCO, 2023). Therefore, digital citizenship is not merely a technical skill; it is also a legal, ethical, and political capacity.

The legal dimension of digital citizenship has become especially important because the internet has created new rights-related questions. These include freedom of expression online, privacy, data protection, access to information, platform accountability, protection from online harassment, algorithmic discrimination, misinformation, digital surveillance, and the right to participate in public debate. The United Nations Human Rights Council has repeatedly affirmed that the same rights people have offline must also be protected online, particularly freedom of expression and access to information (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2016). At the same time, digital rights remain unevenly protected across national contexts. Users may know that online rights exist, but they may be uncertain about how to claim them, which institutions are responsible, or whether asserting rights may expose them to social or legal risks.

Digital globalization intensifies these tensions. On the one hand, it expands rights awareness by exposing citizens to international legal norms, comparative experiences, activist networks, and global discourses of accountability. A person in Tehran can watch debates about data protection in Europe, follow global human rights campaigns, read international news about digital surveillance, or compare local regulations with global standards. On the other hand, digital globalization can also produce confusion, mistrust, and fragmented legal knowledge. Rights language circulates rapidly online, but not always accurately. Legal information may be simplified, politicized, decontextualized, or mixed with misinformation. As a result, online rights awareness may increase without necessarily producing legally accurate understanding or effective civic action.

Civic participation has also been reshaped by digital platforms. Traditional civic participation includes voting, attending public meetings, joining associations, contacting officials, volunteering, and participating in community organizations. Digital civic participation includes online petitions, hashtag campaigns, digital advocacy, sharing public-interest information, participating in online deliberation, reporting problems through e-government systems, and mobilizing around social causes (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Boulianne, 2015). Research on connective action suggests that digital media enable personalized

forms of participation in which individuals engage with public issues through flexible, networked, and self-expressive actions rather than only through formal organizations (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). This means that civic participation may become more accessible, but also more individualized and unstable.

The relationship between online awareness and civic participation is complex. Access to legal information can encourage citizens to recognize injustice, discuss public problems, and take action. However, awareness alone is not sufficient. Civic participation depends on trust, perceived efficacy, institutional responsiveness, perceived safety, social support, and digital literacy. Studies of online civic engagement show that social media can strengthen participation by facilitating information exchange, network formation, and mobilization, but its effects vary according to political context, inequality, and user capacity (Boulianne, 2015; Lee, 2021). In some contexts, online participation may remain symbolic or cautious because users fear surveillance, reputational harm, legal consequences, or social backlash. Therefore, the question is not whether digital media simply increase participation, but how people negotiate the opportunities and risks of participation.

In societies where formal legal institutions are perceived as distant, complex, or difficult to access, digital spaces may become alternative arenas for legal interpretation. People may ask legal questions in online groups, follow lawyers or activists on social media, compare personal experiences, or use peer networks to understand procedures. This can democratize access to basic legal knowledge. However, it can also produce dependence on informal sources, unverified advice, and emotionally persuasive narratives. Sarikakis and colleagues (2017), for example, found that social media users' legal consciousness regarding privacy is shaped by limited knowledge of law, platform practices, and everyday negotiation strategies. This suggests that online rights awareness is not simply cognitive knowledge; it is shaped by experience, trust, vulnerability, and perceived power.

The Iranian context provides an important setting for examining these issues. Tehran is a highly connected urban environment where many citizens use digital platforms for communication, education, commerce, news, and public discussion. At the same time, users may experience uncertainty regarding privacy, filtering, surveillance, platform regulation, and the legal consequences of online expression. These conditions make digital citizenship ambivalent. Digital media may expand legal awareness and civic voice, while also producing caution and self-censorship. Understanding this ambivalence is essential for analyzing how digital globalization interacts with local legal culture.

Despite growing research on digital citizenship and civic engagement, less attention has been given to how ordinary citizens in urban non-Western contexts interpret online rights awareness as part of their legal culture. Much of the literature focuses on political participation, digital literacy, or platform use, but fewer studies examine the everyday legal meanings people attach to online participation. There is a need for qualitative research that explores how citizens describe their own experiences of learning about rights online, evaluating legal information, deciding whether to participate, and managing perceived risks.

Accordingly, the present study investigates digital globalization and legal culture through the lived experiences of adult digital media users in Tehran. The study asks: How do citizens develop awareness of rights through online platforms? How do they interpret the relationship between online legal information and civic participation? What barriers limit the transformation of rights awareness into civic action? By addressing these questions, the study contributes to socio-legal scholarship on legal consciousness, digital citizenship, and civic participation. It also provides practical implications for legal education, digital literacy programs, civic institutions, and rights-based policy development in digital societies.

Methods and Materials

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how digital globalization shapes online rights awareness and civic participation among adult digital media users in Tehran. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study focused on meanings, interpretations, experiences, and social practices rather than measurement of predetermined variables. The

research was informed by an interpretive paradigm, assuming that citizens' understanding of rights, law, and participation is socially constructed through interaction with institutions, digital platforms, and everyday cultural contexts. Semi-structured interviews were used as the only method of data collection because they allowed participants to describe their experiences in detail while also enabling the researcher to explore emerging issues flexibly.

The participants were 24 adults living in Tehran, Iran. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the following inclusion criteria: being at least 18 years old, residing in Tehran for at least one year, using digital platforms or social media regularly, and having some experience of encountering rights-related, legal, or civic content online. Maximum variation was considered in terms of gender, age, education, occupation, and intensity of digital media use. Participants included university students, employees, freelancers, teachers, small business owners, legal service users, and civic volunteers. Individuals who were unwilling to participate in an audio-recorded interview or who did not provide informed consent were excluded.

The final sample consisted of 13 women and 11 men. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 46 years. Regarding education, 4 participants had a diploma or associate degree, 10 had a bachelor's degree, 8 had a master's degree, and 2 had a doctoral degree. In terms of occupation, 6 were students, 7 were private-sector employees, 4 were public-sector employees, 3 were self-employed or freelancers, 2 were teachers, and 2 were involved in civil society or volunteer activities. Theoretical saturation was reached after 22 interviews, when no substantially new codes or categories emerged. Two additional interviews were conducted to confirm category stability and strengthen the adequacy of the analysis.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview guide was developed based on the research objectives and relevant literature on legal consciousness, digital citizenship, and civic participation. The main interview questions focused on participants' use of digital platforms, experiences of encountering legal or rights-related content online, perceptions of trustworthy legal information, forms of online civic participation, experiences of fear or caution, and views on how digital media have changed legal awareness in society.

Examples of interview questions included: "Can you describe a time when you learned something about your rights through the internet or social media?" "How do you decide whether legal information online is trustworthy?" "Have you ever participated in an online civic activity, such as signing a petition, sharing a campaign, or commenting on a public issue?" "What factors encourage or discourage you from participating in civic discussions online?" and "How do you think digital platforms have changed people's relationship with law and rights?"

Interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Persian and later translated into English for reporting purposes. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes were written immediately after each interview to record contextual observations, preliminary interpretations, and emerging analytical questions.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis followed a systematic process of familiarization, initial coding, searching for categories, reviewing categories, defining and naming categories, and producing the final report. NVivo software was used to organize transcripts, manage codes, compare cases, and retrieve coded segments. First, the researcher read each transcript several times to become familiar with the content. Second, meaningful units related to rights awareness, online legal learning, trust, participation, fear, and barriers were coded. Third, similar codes were grouped into subcategories and then into broader main categories. Constant comparison was used to examine similarities and differences across participants. Fourth, categories were reviewed against the original transcripts to ensure that they accurately represented the data. Finally, representative quotations were selected to illustrate each category.

Several strategies were used to ensure trustworthiness. Credibility was enhanced through member checking with selected participants, peer debriefing with two qualitative research colleagues, and repeated engagement with the transcripts. Dependability was supported by maintaining an audit trail, including interview guides, coding notes, category development memos, and analytic decisions. Confirmability was strengthened through reflexive memo writing to reduce the influence of researcher assumptions. Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the participants, research context, and findings.

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any stage. Written informed consent was obtained before each interview. Participants' names were replaced with codes such as P1, P2, and P3. Any identifying details were removed from transcripts and quotations. Audio files and transcripts were stored securely and used only for research purposes.

Findings

The study included 24 participants from Tehran. Of the participants, 13 were women (54.2%) and 11 were men (45.8%). In terms of age, 6 participants were between 18 and 25 years old (25.0%), 8 were between 26 and 35 years old (33.3%), 7 were between 36 and 45 years old (29.2%), and 3 were older than 45 years (12.5%). Regarding educational level, 4 participants had a diploma or associate degree (16.7%), 10 had a bachelor's degree (41.7%), 8 had a master's degree (33.3%), and 2 had a doctoral degree (8.3%). Occupationally, 6 participants were students (25.0%), 7 were private-sector employees (29.2%), 4 were public-sector employees (16.7%), 3 were freelancers or self-employed workers (12.5%), 2 were teachers (8.3%), and 2 were civic volunteers or civil society activists (8.3%). All participants reported daily use of at least one digital platform, including Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, online news websites, search engines, and e-government services.

The first main category was digital legal consciousness, referring to the ways participants became aware of legal rights and obligations through digital environments. Participants stated that the internet had made legal language more visible in everyday life. Many had encountered information about privacy, consumer rights, employment contracts, women's rights, cybercrime, family law, and administrative procedures through social media posts, short videos, online discussions, and digital campaigns. For some participants, digital platforms were the first place where they realized that personal problems could be interpreted as legal issues. P7 explained, "Before seeing those posts, I thought many things were just personal problems. Later I understood that some of them were rights issues, like workplace contracts or online harassment." Participants described this awareness as empowering, but also incomplete. Legal information online was often perceived as fragmented, simplified, and sometimes contradictory. P14 stated, "I learn many legal points online, but I am never fully sure if they are correct. One lawyer says one thing, another page says something else." Thus, digital legal consciousness was characterized by increased visibility of rights, but also uncertainty about accuracy, applicability, and institutional enforceability.

The second category was platform-mediated rights learning. Participants did not learn about rights through formal legal education; rather, they learned through platform-specific practices such as following legal influencers, watching short explanatory videos, reading comments, joining discussion channels, and comparing personal experiences. Rights awareness was shaped by platform algorithms, peer recommendations, emotional storytelling, and viral events. Participants emphasized that legal information became more understandable when connected to real stories. P3 said, "When someone explains a legal issue with an example from daily life, I understand it much better than reading the law itself." However, participants also noted that platform-mediated learning could create superficial understanding. Short posts and videos were useful for initial awareness but rarely provided procedural depth. P19 noted, "Instagram gives you the headline of your rights, not the path. You may know you have a right, but you still do not know where to go, what document to prepare, or what will happen next." Therefore, digital

platforms acted as gateways to legal awareness, but they did not always provide reliable, complete, or context-sensitive legal knowledge.

The third main category was cautious civic participation. Participants reported several forms of online civic engagement, including signing petitions, sharing awareness posts, commenting on social issues, participating in campaigns, reporting urban problems through digital systems, and encouraging others to seek legal help. Digital participation was perceived as easier, faster, and less costly than offline participation. P11 explained, “Maybe I cannot attend a meeting or go somewhere physically, but I can share a campaign or sign something online. It gives me a feeling that I did not remain silent.” However, this participation was often cautious and selective. Participants evaluated the sensitivity of the topic, the visibility of their identity, the possible reaction of employers or institutions, and the risk of misunderstanding. Some avoided direct political statements but shared general legal education posts. P5 stated, “I participate, but carefully. I prefer to share educational content about rights rather than write direct criticism.” This category shows that digital civic participation was not absent, but it was shaped by risk management, self-censorship, and strategic communication.

The fourth category was trust, misinformation, and informal verification. Participants were aware that legal information online could be inaccurate, exaggerated, or manipulated. They described several strategies for verifying information, including checking whether the source was a known lawyer, comparing multiple pages, reading comments, searching official websites, asking acquaintances with legal knowledge, and waiting to see whether a claim was repeated by credible sources. P21 said, “I never trust one post. If it is important, I search again, ask a friend, or look for the official source.” However, the ability to verify information varied across participants. Those with higher education or professional networks felt more capable of distinguishing reliable sources. Others relied heavily on popularity indicators such as number of followers, likes, or emotional persuasiveness. Participants also expressed distrust toward both informal online sources and formal institutions. P9 explained, “Sometimes official sources are too complicated, and social media is too unreliable. You are stuck between difficult law and simple but doubtful explanations.” This finding indicates that online rights awareness depends not only on access to information, but also on the capacity to evaluate credibility.

The fifth category was structural barriers to digital citizenship. Participants identified several obstacles that limited the transformation of online rights awareness into meaningful civic participation. These included fear of surveillance, low institutional trust, filtering and platform instability, digital inequality, weak legal literacy, lack of accessible official information, and uncertainty about whether civic action produces results. Some participants believed that online participation could create personal risk without guaranteeing institutional response. P16 stated, “You may write, share, or complain online, but you do not know if anyone responsible will answer. Sometimes you only expose yourself.” Participants also emphasized that not all citizens benefit equally from digital globalization. Older adults, people with limited education, economically disadvantaged groups, and those with weaker digital skills may be excluded from rights-related digital participation. P2 noted, “People say everything is online now, but many people do not know how to find correct information. Being online is not the same as being empowered.” This category shows that digital citizenship requires more than connectivity; it requires safety, literacy, trust, inclusion, and institutional responsiveness.

Discussion

The present study explored how digital globalization shapes online rights awareness and civic participation among adult digital media users in Tehran. The findings showed that digital platforms have become important spaces for the formation of legal culture. Participants learned about rights, legal procedures, and civic issues through social media, online discussions, digital campaigns, and informal networks. However, this awareness was not always systematic, accurate, or actionable. The study identified five main categories: digital legal consciousness, platform-mediated rights learning, cautious civic

participation, trust and informal verification, and structural barriers to digital citizenship. Together, these categories suggest that digital globalization expands the symbolic and informational presence of law in everyday life, but it does not automatically create empowered legal agency.

The first finding, digital legal consciousness, indicates that participants increasingly interpret everyday problems through the language of rights. This aligns with legal consciousness theory, which emphasizes that law is experienced not only in formal institutions but also in ordinary social life (Ewick & Silbey, 1998; Merry, 1990). Digital platforms appear to extend this everyday legal consciousness by making rights discourse more visible and accessible. Participants learned that issues such as workplace exploitation, online harassment, privacy violations, consumer fraud, and administrative injustice could be understood legally. This finding supports Sarikakis et al. (2017), who showed that social media users negotiate privacy violations through partial and situated understandings of law. In the present study, digital legal consciousness was empowering because it enabled participants to name injustice, but it was also uncertain because online legal knowledge was fragmented and sometimes contradictory.

The second finding, platform-mediated rights learning, shows that participants often learned about rights through social media formats rather than formal legal education. Short videos, personal stories, comments, and influencer explanations made legal issues more understandable. This supports the broader digital citizenship literature, which views digital environments as spaces where citizens acquire knowledge, skills, and participatory capacities (Council of Europe, 2022; Mossberger et al., 2008). UNESCO's emphasis on digital citizenship education also supports the idea that digital participation requires critical, ethical, and informed engagement with online content (UNESCO, 2023). However, the findings also demonstrate the limitations of platform-based learning. Participants often received simplified legal messages without procedural guidance. This means that platforms can raise awareness, but they may not provide the depth needed for effective rights claiming.

The third finding, cautious civic participation, suggests that digital media have lowered the practical barriers to civic engagement while simultaneously creating new forms of risk management. Participants engaged in online petitions, awareness campaigns, public comments, and digital reporting, but they often avoided direct or sensitive expression. This finding is consistent with Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action, which argues that digital media enable personalized and flexible forms of participation. It also aligns with research showing that social media can support civic engagement by facilitating information exchange and network building (Boulianne, 2015; Lee, 2021). However, the present study adds that in contexts marked by uncertainty or low trust, participation becomes cautious, strategic, and selective. Participants preferred educational or indirect content because it allowed them to remain civically present while reducing perceived exposure.

The fourth finding, trust, misinformation, and informal verification, highlights the importance of credibility in online rights awareness. Participants did not passively accept all digital legal information. Many compared multiple sources, searched official websites, asked knowledgeable acquaintances, or checked whether content was produced by lawyers. This finding supports scholarship on digital literacy, which emphasizes that meaningful digital citizenship requires the ability to evaluate information critically (Council of Europe, 2022; UNESCO, 2023). At the same time, participants' verification strategies were uneven. Some relied on follower counts, emotional narratives, or peer approval. This indicates that misinformation is not only a technical problem but also a legal-cultural problem. When formal legal information is inaccessible or difficult to understand, citizens may depend on informal sources even when they recognize their limitations.

The fifth finding, structural barriers to digital citizenship, shows that digital rights awareness is constrained by broader social, institutional, and technological conditions. Participants identified fear of surveillance, low institutional trust, platform filtering, digital inequality, and lack of accessible official information as barriers to participation. This finding is consistent with the United Nations Human Rights Council's position that human rights protected offline must also be protected online,

including freedom of expression and access to information (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2016). It also corresponds with critical research on digital citizenship, which argues that access alone is insufficient without inclusion, safety, and meaningful participation (Mossberger et al., 2008). In the present study, being connected did not necessarily mean being empowered. Participants needed trustworthy information, institutional response, and protection from risks.

Overall, the findings suggest that digital globalization produces a hybrid legal culture. This culture combines global rights language with local experiences of uncertainty, institutional distrust, and cautious participation. Participants were exposed to transnational discourses of privacy, freedom of expression, consumer protection, and civic accountability, but they interpreted these discourses through their local legal and social context. This supports the idea that globalization does not simply homogenize legal culture. Instead, global norms are translated, adapted, and sometimes limited by local institutional realities. Digital platforms therefore function as both bridges and filters: they connect users to global legal ideas, but they also reshape those ideas through algorithms, platform norms, peer networks, and local constraints.

The study also contributes to civic participation research by showing that online participation should not be measured only by visible activism. Many participants engaged in low-intensity, educational, or indirect forms of civic action. They shared legal information, warned others, discussed public problems, and used digital systems to report issues. These activities may appear modest, but they reflect emerging forms of civic agency. At the same time, the cautious nature of participation shows that digital civic engagement cannot be separated from questions of safety, trust, and institutional accountability. Digital participation becomes meaningful when citizens believe that their actions can produce recognition, response, or change.

Another important implication is that legal literacy and digital literacy must be integrated. Participants needed not only access to legal concepts, but also the ability to evaluate sources, understand procedures, protect privacy, and communicate safely. A person may know that a right exists but still lack the capacity to claim it. Therefore, digital rights awareness should be understood as a multilayered process involving knowledge, interpretation, verification, confidence, and action. Legal institutions, universities, civil society organizations, and digital platforms can play an important role in making legal information more accessible, accurate, and user-centered.

This study has several limitations. First, the participants were selected from Tehran, and their experiences may not represent citizens in smaller cities, rural areas, or provinces with different levels of digital access and civic infrastructure. Second, the study relied only on semi-structured interviews; therefore, it captured participants' self-reported experiences rather than direct observation of online behavior. Third, because digital rights and civic participation can be sensitive topics, some participants may have limited their responses or avoided discussing certain experiences in detail. Fourth, the sample included digitally active adults, which means that the perspectives of individuals with limited internet access or low digital literacy may be underrepresented.

Future studies should compare online rights awareness and civic participation across different cities, age groups, social classes, and educational backgrounds. Comparative research between urban and rural populations could clarify how digital inequality affects legal culture. Future researchers may also use mixed-method designs, combining interviews with digital ethnography, content analysis of online legal information, or surveys measuring digital legal literacy. Longitudinal studies would be useful for examining whether online rights awareness leads to sustained civic participation over time. Further research should also investigate the role of lawyers, legal influencers, civil society organizations, and official institutions in shaping the credibility of online legal information.

Practical interventions should focus on strengthening both legal literacy and digital literacy. Public institutions should provide clear, accessible, and user-friendly online legal information in simple language. Universities, schools, and civil society organizations can develop educational programs on digital rights, privacy, misinformation, civic responsibility, and safe

participation. Legal professionals should be encouraged to produce reliable public legal education content through digital platforms. Institutions should also create transparent and responsive digital complaint and consultation systems so that citizens can see practical outcomes from civic participation. Finally, policies aimed at digital citizenship should prioritize inclusion, privacy protection, accessibility, and trust-building.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between digital globalization, legal culture, online rights awareness, and civic participation among adults in Tehran. The findings showed that digital platforms have become significant spaces for legal learning and civic expression. Participants used online environments to access rights-related information, interpret personal problems as legal issues, participate in civic campaigns, and discuss public concerns. However, the study also revealed that online rights awareness is often fragmented, uncertain, and constrained by misinformation, fear, low trust, and unequal digital literacy. Digital globalization therefore reshapes legal culture in ambivalent ways: it expands access to rights discourse while also creating new vulnerabilities and uncertainties.

The study concludes that online legal awareness does not automatically produce empowered civic participation. For digital citizenship to become meaningful, citizens need reliable information, procedural guidance, safe spaces for expression, privacy protection, and responsive institutions. Legal culture in the digital age should therefore be understood as a dynamic interaction between global rights narratives, local institutional realities, platform structures, and everyday civic practices. Strengthening digital citizenship requires coordinated efforts from legal institutions, educators, policymakers, civil society organizations, and digital platforms.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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