



Character Education in the Era of Technological Development and Advancement

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ABSTRACT

The advancement of technology presents both opportunities and challenges for education. While technology supports learning processes, uncontrolled use can negatively affect behavior, particularly among adolescents. Ethical use of technology enhances learning efficiency, curriculum attainment, creativity, and student autonomy. Conversely, excessive and unrestricted use can cause moral decline, reduced social interaction, misuse of digital tools, and diminished critical-thinking skills, which in turn weaken motivation and academic achievement. In this context, character education is a crucial element for shaping an integrity-driven younger generation amid rapid globalization and digital transformation. This study employed a literature-review approach, analyzing sources through data reduction, thematic categorization, interpretation, and synthesis. Findings indicate that character education provides a foundational basis for developing morally responsible, dignified, and honorable youth, exemplified by the prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Effective implementation requires collective responsibility from schools, families, communities, and government. Strong collaboration among these stakeholders will create a civilized, respectful, safe, and harmonious environment that supports the development of resilient, intelligent, high-achieving, and responsible generations. Integrating character values into the curriculum, promoting exemplary role models, strengthening parental involvement, and enhancing digital literacy are effective strategies to cultivate a generation equipped with robust character values in the digital era.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education refers to the deliberate process of cultivating moral and ethical values that enable individuals to make sound judgments and act responsibly in their personal and social lives. As a lifelong process, it plays a fundamental role at every stage of human development, particularly in helping individuals respond to the opportunities and challenges created by rapid technological advancement. Character formation emerges through continuous interaction with family members, teachers, peers, and the wider community. Within these

social contexts, values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, tolerance, and empathy are reinforced through everyday communication, behavior, and shared experiences.

Within formal education, character education represents an essential dimension of the broader educational mission. Educational success should therefore not be assessed solely through students' cognitive achievement or technical competence. Equally important is the development of the affective domain, which reflects the internalization of ethical principles, positive attitudes, and moral responsibility. Strong affective development enables learners to apply their knowledge and skills in ways that are consistent with ethical values and societal expectations. This perspective is reflected in Indonesia's National Education System Law (Law No. 20 of 2003), which defines education as a conscious and systematic effort to create learning environments that enable students to develop their spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social potential while cultivating noble character and the competencies needed for both personal fulfillment and social participation.

Realizing these educational objectives requires continuous improvement in educational planning, policy, and classroom practice. Education is expected to foster not only knowledge and technical skills but also attitudes and behaviors that prepare learners to participate responsibly in society. Consequently, educational quality should be understood in terms of producing graduates who are intellectually capable, ethically grounded, and socially responsible.

At the same time, digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped educational practices. Digital technologies have become indispensable tools for teaching, learning, communication, and educational administration. Their integration into education is no longer optional but has become a practical necessity for improving efficiency, expanding access to information, and supporting innovative learning environments. This transformation also requires educators and other educational stakeholders to continually strengthen their digital competencies and adapt to emerging technological developments.

The adoption of digital technology has generated substantial benefits across educational settings. Administrative processes have become more efficient, teachers have gained access to a wide range of instructional resources and assessment tools, and students can obtain learning materials quickly from diverse digital platforms. These advantages have become even more apparent with the rapid emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), including generative AI applications such as ChatGPT, which provide unprecedented opportunities for personalized learning, academic support, and information retrieval. Despite these benefits, technological advancement also presents significant ethical and educational challenges. Without adequate moral guidance, technology may encourage irresponsible behavior, weaken interpersonal relationships, and contribute to various forms of academic and social misconduct.

International organizations have increasingly emphasized the need to balance technological innovation with character development. UNESCO (2023) and the OECD (2025) acknowledge that digital technologies have substantially expanded access to educational resources and enhanced teaching and learning processes. Nevertheless, both organizations caution that technological progress has introduced new risks for students' moral and social development. Unlimited access to digital information, the culture of instant gratification, cyberbullying, plagiarism, misinformation, declining standards of digital communication, and

excessive dependence on technology have become growing concerns within contemporary education.

Evidence from the OECD's analysis of the PISA 2022 results further demonstrates that appropriate use of digital technology can improve learning outcomes. However, excessive or poorly supervised technology use is associated with lower learning concentration, reduced student well-being, and weaker social competencies. These findings suggest that digital transformation should not focus exclusively on academic achievement but should also strengthen digital literacy, ethical awareness, and character development.

Similarly, UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report argues that technology should complement rather than replace teachers or the humanistic values embedded in education. Digital tools should serve as instruments for promoting inclusive, learner-centered education while fostering integrity, empathy, responsibility, collaboration, and critical thinking. UNESCO further emphasizes that educational policies on digital transformation must carefully consider the broader social and ethical implications of technology adoption.

In Indonesia, strengthening character education has become one of the government's central educational priorities. Despite this commitment, the integration of character education into technology-supported learning remains inconsistent. Existing educational technologies generally emphasize improvements in academic performance and digital competence, while essential character values including honesty, responsibility, discipline, ethical digital behavior, and social awareness are often addressed only implicitly or receive limited attention (Yudi & Maryam, 2023). Consequently, there is an urgent need to explore how digital technologies can be intentionally designed and implemented to promote both academic achievement and character development. Such efforts are expected to encourage students to use technology responsibly, ethically, and in accordance with moral principles.

Although the relationship between technology and character education has attracted increasing scholarly attention, empirical studies that explicitly integrate both dimensions remain relatively limited. Previous research illustrates several important gaps.

Pariyatin (2022), in *The Effect of Online Learning on Strengthening Character Education of Integrated Islamic Elementary School Students*, reported that online learning can strengthen students' character when teachers deliberately integrate values such as discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and religiosity into classroom activities. However, the study focused primarily on emergency online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore provides limited insight into character education within the current era of widespread digital transformation.

Yudi and Maryam (2023) examined the influence of students' digital literacy on the effectiveness of Islamic character education in vocational high schools. Their findings indicate that stronger digital literacy contributes positively to students' religious character development. Nevertheless, their analysis was largely confined to digital literacy and religious values, leaving broader questions regarding the integration of diverse digital technologies into character education insufficiently explored.

Astuti et al. (2025) investigated school-based character education management in Indonesia's digital era and concluded that successful implementation depends on the alignment of institutional policies, teacher competence, and technology utilization. Although their study provides valuable managerial insights, it does not directly examine how technology influences

students' character formation or how digital tools can be systematically integrated into classroom-based character education.

At the international level, UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2023/2025) emphasizes that digital transformation should be accompanied by learner-centered pedagogical approaches that prioritize ethical and character development. As a global policy document, however, the report highlights the need for more context-specific empirical evidence, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia. Likewise, the OECD (2025), in *How's Life for Children in the Digital Age?*, concludes that although digital technologies expand educational opportunities, excessive digital engagement may adversely affect children's mental health, social interaction, and overall well-being unless supported by effective character education and appropriate adult guidance.

Building upon these findings, this study argues that character education constitutes a critical strategy for addressing the ethical and social challenges associated with digital technology use. Rather than treating technology solely as a medium for instruction, the study positions character education as the primary framework guiding its educational use. The proposed model integrates digital technology, digital literacy, digital ethics, and collaborative partnerships among teachers, parents, and schools to promote students' holistic character development. By doing so, the study extends existing literature beyond examining the relationship between technology and character education to proposing a practical implementation model that supports schools in navigating the ongoing era of digital transformation and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research design using a library research approach to explore how digital technology can be integrated into character education. Rather than relying on empirical field data, the study drew upon a comprehensive review of scholarly literature to develop a conceptual understanding of the topic. The data corpus consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, policy reports, and other credible scholarly publications relevant to digital technology and character education. To ensure the currency of the analysis, priority was given to sources published between 2020 and 2025, although earlier seminal works were included where necessary to provide theoretical foundations.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic documentation process. Relevant publications were identified and retrieved from major academic databases using keywords related to digital technology, character education, digital literacy, educational technology, and digital ethics. After the initial screening, the selected literature was examined based on its relevance, methodological rigor, and contribution to the research objectives.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The analytical process involved several interconnected stages, including data reduction, coding, thematic classification, interpretation, and synthesis. Through these procedures, recurring themes, conceptual relationships, and emerging patterns were identified to explain how digital technology has been integrated into character education, the opportunities it offers, the challenges it presents, and the research gaps that remain insufficiently addressed in previous studies.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, all selected sources were critically appraised with respect to their academic quality, methodological soundness, and relevance to the research questions. Source triangulation was also employed by comparing evidence from multiple studies, institutional reports, and theoretical perspectives to minimize potential bias and strengthen the consistency of the analysis. The synthesized findings were subsequently used to develop a conceptual framework that illustrates how digital technology can be strategically utilized to reinforce character education within the context of contemporary digital transformation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Definition and Concept of Character Education

Character education occupies a central position in Islamic educational thought. The importance of moral formation can be traced to the prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), whose teachings placed ethical refinement at the heart of education. From this perspective, education is not merely a process of transmitting knowledge but also of cultivating moral awareness that enables individuals to distinguish truth (*haq*) from falsehood (*batil*) and to translate these values into everyday behavior.

Contemporary scholars similarly view character education as a deliberate effort to nurture moral values through education and daily experience (Dharma Kesuma et al., 2011; Furqon Hidayatullah, 2010). Character is therefore closely linked to personality because it is reflected in the ways individuals think, make decisions, and interact with others (Hasan, 2023). A comparable understanding can be found in Al-Ghazali's *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, where character is described as a deeply rooted disposition from which actions emerge naturally, without conscious deliberation (Al-Ghazali, 1998). This perspective emphasizes that genuine character is not demonstrated through occasional virtuous acts but through consistent patterns of behavior that arise from internalized moral values.

Character is closely associated with the concepts of morality, ethics, virtue, and *akhlaq*, although each is grounded in a different normative framework. In Islamic scholarship, *akhlaq* derives its authority from divine revelation, whereas morality is generally shaped by social norms and shared cultural values. Ethics, by contrast, is primarily founded on rational reflection and philosophical reasoning (Syarbini, 2016). Despite these distinctions, all three frameworks ultimately seek to guide human behavior toward what is considered good, just, and socially beneficial.

In educational practice, character is commonly categorized as either positive or negative. Positive character encompasses virtues such as honesty, empathy, responsibility, environmental awareness, and respect for others. These qualities are widely recognized as universal values that education should continuously cultivate. Conversely, traits such as dishonesty, arrogance, intolerance, indifference, and cruelty represent negative character because they undermine both individual development and social harmony (Mulyasa, 2011). The primary purpose of character education is therefore to reinforce positive dispositions while preventing or transforming undesirable behaviors.

Rather than being inherited, character develops gradually through continuous educational experiences and social interaction (Hakim Najili et al., 2022). Family, school, and

community each contribute to this lifelong process by shaping individuals' ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Within formal education, character development can be strengthened by integrating ethical values across all subjects rather than treating character education as a separate component of the curriculum. Such integration allows moral learning to become part of students' everyday academic experiences.

One of the most influential contemporary frameworks for character education was proposed by Thomas Lickona, whose work has significantly shaped educational discourse worldwide. Lickona (2013) argues that a nation's long-term development depends not only on intellectual achievement but also on the moral character of its citizens. His framework identifies three interconnected dimensions of character education: moral knowing, which refers to understanding ethical principles; moral feeling, which concerns the internalization of those values; and moral action, which involves translating moral understanding into consistent behavior. These dimensions demonstrate that effective character education extends beyond cognitive learning and requires the cultivation of emotional commitment and habitual practice.

Majid (2011) likewise describes these three dimensions as the foundational pillars of character education. Moral values cannot be sustained through theoretical instruction alone; they must be reinforced through continuous practice and meaningful social experiences. Consequently, character education should begin within the family, be systematically strengthened in schools, and continue through interactions within the wider community. Because character formation is cumulative, educators have a critical responsibility not only to teach ethical principles but also to create learning environments that encourage students to apply those principles consistently in their relationships with others and with the natural environment.

This perspective is further reflected in the framework proposed by Efendi and Ningsih (2020), who identify nine core pillars of character education rooted in universal moral values: love for God and His creation; independence and responsibility; honesty (*amanah*); respect and courtesy; generosity and cooperation; self-confidence and perseverance; leadership and justice; humility and kindness; and tolerance, peace, and unity. These values are expected to develop simultaneously across the three principal educational environments—family, school, and society—thereby creating consistency in learners' moral development.

Ultimately, successful character education involves more than transmitting knowledge about ethical values. Learners must first understand moral principles, then internalize them emotionally before expressing them through consistent behavior. This process cultivates moral awareness, empathy, personal responsibility, and commitment to ethical conduct, allowing moral values to become an integral part of an individual's identity rather than merely external rules to be followed.

From an Islamic perspective, this process is directed toward the development of *akhlaq al-karimah* (noble character) based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Islamic education emphasizes harmonious relationships between human beings and Allah, among fellow human beings, and with the surrounding environment. Accordingly, the cultivation of noble character occupies a central place within Islamic educational philosophy. This objective is explicitly reflected in the prophetic mission of Muhammad, who declared that he was sent to perfect noble character. The Qur'an further

presents the Prophet as the highest model of exemplary conduct, as stated in Surah Al-Qalam (68:4):

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

Meaning: “*And indeed, you are of a great moral character.*” (Qur’an, Surah Al-Qalam: 4).

Islam guides its followers through moral education as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as noble character serves as a fundamental foundation for establishing harmonious relationships with the Creator (*Khalīq*) and with fellow human beings. This is also emphasized in Surah Al-Ahzab, verse 70, which states:

أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

The Qur’an, as mentioned above, emphasizes that every individual must consistently guard their speech from falsehood and instead speak truthfully. This command represents an essential teaching of ethical communication among individuals, aimed at maintaining harmonious relationships and preventing conflict, thereby fostering a life that is safe, peaceful, and prosperous. In other words, Islam guides its followers to uphold honesty in all interactions (*muamalah*) so that social harmony can be sustained. In another verse, Islam teaches how to build good relationships with others by promoting righteous conduct toward fellow human beings, as stated in Surah An-Nahl, verse 90, as follows:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَائِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

The verse above contains several guidelines for humanity, namely the command to act justly and to do good. The command to uphold justice encompasses one’s speech, attitudes, actions, and behavior, both toward oneself and others. Likewise, the command to perform good deeds includes providing assistance to relatives, close family members, extended family, and indeed anyone in need, carried out sincerely and wholeheartedly. Conversely, Allah prohibits acts that are immoral or reprehensible, such as adultery, theft, murder, and other forms of wrongdoing. These actions are contrary to and inconsistent with religious values and the customs upheld within society. In addition, hostility toward others is also forbidden, as it may lead to injustice and oppression among people. The teachings of character in Islam aim to shape individuals who are faithful, pious, and of noble character, enabling them to contribute positively to others and to achieve a life that is safe, peaceful, and prosperous.

To achieve the educational objectives outlined above, education should not be limited to the attainment of academic excellence alone; it must also foster integrity and noble character. Therefore, character development should be carried out in a deliberate and systematic manner to help individuals understand, appreciate, and act upon sound ethical values. Character education should be continuously nurtured across various aspects of life, including interpersonal skills, ethical decision-making, and social and emotional competencies (Lickona, 1991). Education plays a crucial role in developing and producing an outstanding generation. Consequently, education should not merely be viewed as a process of knowledge transfer but also as a process of cultivating character and moral values. Through this process, graduates are expected to demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviors in their interactions with themselves, other people, society, and the natural environment.

The success of character education is one of the key determinants in producing a generation that is both excellent and dignified. According to Efendi and Ningsih (2020), developing such a generation can be achieved by fostering ethical and responsible individuals, enhancing social and emotional competencies, promoting active and productive citizenship, supporting academic achievement, and strengthening character development for everyday life. High-quality education, therefore, serves as the foundation for producing competent, responsible, and morally upright citizens.

The Negative Impacts of Technology Use in the Digital Era

The rapid advancement of technology across virtually every aspect of modern life has created extensive opportunities for individuals to access information according to their needs. Technology is now used by people of all age groups, including students within educational settings. Its utilization has undeniably made many activities easier and more efficient, particularly in accessing information and obtaining learning resources. Consequently, the use of technology has become an indispensable component of contemporary education, significantly supporting various educational processes. Nevertheless, despite its numerous benefits, technology also exerts negative influences on users' attitudes and behaviors. These adverse effects present significant challenges for character education, including the following.

a. Moral Degradation

Moral degradation refers to the decline of an individual's moral values and ethical conduct. Although this phenomenon may occur across all age groups, adolescents are particularly vulnerable because they are in the process of developing their personal identities. Consequently, their use of digital technology can significantly influence their attitudes and behaviors. Unlimited internet access enables young people to easily obtain information and consume digital content that may conflict with religious teachings and moral values. As a result, many adolescents become exposed to inappropriate content, which may distract them from fulfilling their responsibilities and obligations as students. Furthermore, such exposure may negatively affect those around them.

In this context, character education becomes a crucial strategy for preventing moral degradation (Rouf, Ahid, & Sutrisno, 2022). Strong character education functions as a protective shield that enables individuals to uphold moral and ethical principles while resisting harmful influences that may damage both themselves and others. By cultivating integrity, self-discipline, responsibility, and ethical awareness, character education equips young people with the moral resilience necessary to navigate the challenges of the digital era without compromising their values.

b. Reduced Social Interaction

Unrestricted use of technology may have adverse effects on its users, leading them to become increasingly reluctant to engage in normal social interactions. Many individuals prefer to spend more of their time in front of screens, enjoying virtual activities on social media rather than participating in real-life social interactions. They tend to isolate themselves and experience greater difficulty in building interpersonal relationships. The widespread adoption of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the nature of social interaction, shifting communication from face-to-face encounters to online

communication. Many people now prefer to communicate remotely with friends, family members, teachers, and others through digital media.

This phenomenon reflects an increasing dependence on technology, which reduces opportunities for direct interaction and meaningful conversations. Consequently, individuals have fewer opportunities to develop healthy communication skills in real-world settings. They spend less time interacting directly with family members and friends and, in many cases, have only a limited number of close relationships in their everyday lives.

c. Misuse of Technology

Technology has undoubtedly improved human productivity and facilitated numerous daily activities. However, alongside these benefits, technology also has the potential to produce harmful consequences that may undermine users' moral values and ethical conduct, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Such negative consequences arise when technology is used irresponsibly or without appropriate limitations. Examples include the dissemination of false information, the manipulation of digital images, access to pornographic websites, the spread of provocative content and hate speech targeting particular groups, as well as more serious cybercrimes such as bank hacking, online financial fraud, and the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information belonging to institutions or governments.

d. Declining or Loss of Critical Thinking Skills

The emergence of modern technology has significantly influenced the way people think, particularly among adolescents and young adults. In general, technological innovation is intended to improve efficiency and provide adaptive solutions that meet the demands of an increasingly dynamic society. Digital applications such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), ChatGPT, and Canva have greatly facilitated human activities and, in some cases, are capable of performing tasks that were previously carried out exclusively by humans.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems designed to simulate human intelligence and cognitive processes. AI enables users to complete various tasks according to their needs and can interact with users in a manner that resembles human communication. It is capable of generating responses and completing requested tasks rapidly and efficiently. While these capabilities provide considerable advantages, they may also encourage excessive dependence on AI as a primary source of information and problem-solving.

The use of AI in education has expanded rapidly among both teachers and students. AI provides significant support in completing academic tasks and serves as a valuable discussion partner during the learning process. However, this convenience may also contribute to changes in individuals' thinking patterns. Since people generally prefer completing tasks quickly and effortlessly, excessive reliance on AI may encourage educators and students to depend on technology rather than engaging in independent thinking and learning. Such dependence has the potential to diminish critical, active,

creative, and innovative thinking, particularly in developing a deep understanding of concepts and practical skills.

This argument is consistent with the findings of Johnson and Kress, as cited in Muhammad Faisal (2024), who argue that excessive use of technology contributes to declining levels of concentration, critical thinking, and creativity. Furthermore, excessive dependence on digital technology encourages individuals to seek immediate and accurate answers without making sufficient effort to analyze problems independently or develop their own understanding.

Strategies for Implementing Character Education in Schools in the Era of Information Technology Development

The rapid advancement of information technology has become an inevitable aspect of contemporary life. Technology-based lifestyles are now inseparable from society across all age groups (Tafsiruddin, 2021). Although technology offers numerous benefits, it also presents significant challenges, as discussed in the previous section. Therefore, strengthening character values is considered one of the most effective approaches to minimizing the negative consequences associated with technological development. Several strategies can be implemented to cultivate character values in schools.

a. Integrating Character Values into the School Curriculum

Character education should be incorporated as an integral component of the school curriculum rather than being treated as a separate subject. Instead, character values should be embedded across all learning areas and educational activities. Character education cannot be adequately represented solely through religious education courses because moral values encompass all aspects of human life and should be practiced in real-world contexts.

Accordingly, character education should be integrated into every dimension of school life, including classroom instruction, social interactions, and extracurricular activities designed by the school. Character values should be continuously reinforced throughout the teaching and learning process by incorporating values such as discipline, honesty, justice, responsibility, empathy, and other moral virtues into every subject according to its specific learning objectives. Through this integrated approach, character education aims to develop students into morally responsible and well-rounded individuals who are capable of facing the challenges of modern society with integrity and resilience.

Sholekah (2020) argues that character education serves as the foundation for developing a capable generation with strong personalities, high moral standards, and sound intellectual abilities. Therefore, character education should be implemented in a well-planned and systematic manner within educational institutions. The successful implementation of character values requires the support and commitment of all stakeholders. In schools, for example, character education should be embraced collectively by the entire school community. Educators must share a common understanding of the importance of character education so that they can work collaboratively to instill moral values and ethical principles in every student. Character education cannot be achieved through a short-term process; rather, it requires continuous practice, habituation, supervision, and collaboration among all stakeholders over an extended period.

b. Implementing the Role-Modeling Approach

The implementation of character values through role modeling is one of the most effective approaches to character education. Character education should not be limited to theoretical instruction but must also be demonstrated through real-life practice. In the school context, teachers are the primary actors responsible for managing the teaching and learning process. Therefore, possessing exemplary personal character is an essential quality for every educator. This view is supported by Sri Sarjana and Nur Khayati (2021), who argue that ethics constitute a positive force in shaping teachers' professional personalities. Teachers should consistently uphold moral and ethical values because they are the first individuals to recognize signs of moral decline among students. Consequently, teachers function as authentic role models whose attitudes and behaviors provide concrete examples for students to emulate.

Within the school environment, teachers serve as models in various aspects of students' lives. Their words, actions, attitudes, and behaviors both inside and outside the classroom become examples that students naturally observe and imitate. This also includes the ethical use of digital technology (Gunawan, Sauri, & Ganeswara, 2019). Therefore, teachers should consistently demonstrate positive character values such as discipline, honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, empathy, respect, and courtesy in all interactions. Likewise, in the digital context, Arsini, Yoana, and Prastami, as cited in Joko Subando (2024), emphasize that exemplary conduct also encompasses the ethical use of technology, including respecting intellectual property rights, communicating politely in online environments, and sharing accurate and reliable information. Such behaviors provide meaningful examples that encourage students to practice ethical conduct within digital environments.

Muhammad Fadlan Fadillah Arif et al. (2024) further assert that teachers' exemplary behavior has a significant influence on students' character development. The character values demonstrated through teachers' attitudes and behaviors become concrete models that students are likely to imitate. Moreover, teachers' exemplary conduct contributes to the creation of a positive and healthy school culture. Beyond serving as role models, teachers are also responsible for continuously supervising and guiding students' attitudes, behaviors, speech, actions, and technology use throughout the educational process. Continuous guidance enables students to develop positive habits and consistently practice desirable behaviors.

This perspective is consistent with Imam Al-Ghazali's view that character education can be effectively developed through the repeated practice of righteous deeds (*amal shalih*). Similarly, Shoimah (2018) and Manan (2017) emphasize that habituation is one of the most effective methods of character education because values become deeply rooted through repeated practice. Through continuous habituation, students not only develop positive behaviors but also receive guidance whenever they engage in actions that conflict with moral values. This process enables them to recognize their mistakes, understand appropriate conduct, and gradually internalize virtuous behaviors as part of their personality. Over time, consistent guidance and repeated practice foster intrinsic awareness, enabling students to behave ethically in their daily lives, particularly

in the context of the rapid development of information technology and the increasingly digital society.

c. Strengthening Digital Literacy

In the era of rapid technological advancement, educational institutions have increasingly adopted technology as an essential component of the teaching and learning process. Technology has proven to be highly beneficial in facilitating various educational activities for different stakeholders. Consequently, digital tools such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Canva, and ChatGPT are now widely utilized by educators in Indonesia to support classroom instruction. Furthermore, AI education is expected to become part of the national curriculum as part of the government's initiative to integrate artificial intelligence into educational institutions.

Given this development, students need to be equipped with adequate digital literacy skills, as digital literacy is fundamental not only for the effective use of technology but also for fostering ethical behavior and character in digital environments. According to A'yuni (2015), digital literacy refers to the ability to understand and utilize information from various digital sources. In this sense, digital literacy extends beyond merely operating digital devices; it also encompasses the ability to locate, evaluate, select, and use information critically, creatively, innovatively, collaboratively, and communicatively while ensuring digital safety and adapting to evolving socio-cultural contexts (Haickal Attallah Naufal).

In the digital era, students are expected not only to become proficient users of technology but also to understand the implications of its use. Such understanding enables them to distinguish between reliable and misleading information, utilize technology for positive and educational purposes, enhance their motivation to learn, and avoid the spread of misinformation or fake news. Moreover, digital literacy helps students prevent the misuse of technology and encourages them to contribute to a responsible and ethical social media environment.

This perspective is consistent with Syerli Manarata (2025), who argues that ethical considerations should never be overlooked in the use of technology because technology should function only as: **(1)** a supporting tool rather than a substitute for human reasoning; **(2)** a resource whose AI-generated outputs must always be verified rather than copied and pasted without critical evaluation; **(3)** a technology that should never be used to manipulate learning data or academic work; **(4)** a system that requires the protection of students' and teachers' personal data; and **(5)** a medium through which students should be actively engaged in discussions concerning the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence. These principles demonstrate that ethics is an indispensable element of digital technology use, enabling individuals to utilize technology wisely, responsibly, and with integrity.

Through digital literacy education, students acquire knowledge and understanding of ethical technology use, including appropriate online communication practices. Consequently, digital communication should continue to uphold moral values such as politeness, respect for others' privacy, and the avoidance of hate speech, harassment, and incitement. In addition, students develop an awareness of the potential negative consequences of technology and social media use and learn strategies for

preventing cyberbullying and the dissemination of harmful digital content that may undermine ethical behavior within online communities.

Furthermore, digital literacy enables students to utilize online resources for independent learning, access supplementary learning materials, and enhance their academic competencies. In this context, technology should be viewed primarily as a tool for personalizing learning, fostering creativity and learner autonomy, improving the efficiency of educational processes, and supporting the achievement of curriculum objectives. Therefore, ethical principles must remain a fundamental consideration in every aspect of technology use, ensuring that digital innovation contributes not only to academic achievement but also to the development of responsible, ethical, and morally grounded individuals.

CONCLUSION

The rapid advancement of digital technology presents both opportunities and challenges for the field of education. On the one hand, technology has become an indispensable tool that supports teaching and learning processes. On the other hand, it may exert negative influences on users' behavior, particularly among adolescent students. In this context, character education has become a crucial component that every young person and student must possess in order to use technology responsibly and ethically.

Character education serves as the fundamental foundation for developing a generation of young people who are morally upright, dignified, and capable of navigating the complexities of an increasingly globalized world. Instilling character values in students and young people is a shared responsibility of the three principal educational environments: schools, families, and the wider community. Strong collaboration among these stakeholders will foster a civilized, respectful, safe, and harmonious environment that supports the development of an intelligent, resilient, outstanding, and responsible generation.

Integrating character values throughout the educational curriculum, promoting exemplary role models, strengthening parental involvement, and enhancing students' digital literacy represent effective strategies for nurturing and developing young people with strong moral character in the era of digital transformation. These integrated efforts ensure that technological advancement not only contributes to academic achievement but also promotes the formation of ethical, responsible, and socially conscious citizens who are well prepared to meet the challenges of the digital age.

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