

Revitalizing Moral Education in the Digital Era

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Abstract: *The digital era has brought significant disruption to the societal order of values and behavior, particularly among the younger generation. Phenomena of moral degradation, such as the spread of boaxes, cyberbullying, intolerance, and low empathy in virtual interactions, pose real challenges for the world of education. This research aims to analyze the urgency and formulate strategies for revitalizing moral education relevant to the context of the digital era. Using qualitative research methods through in-depth literature study, this article presents a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and opportunities for moral education amidst the onslaught of technology. The results indicate that revitalization requires a multidimensional approach, encompassing: (1) integration of moral values into the digital curriculum, (2) utilization of digital media as a means of moral education, (3) strengthening the role of teachers as digital-moral exemplars, (4) collaboration among the tri-center of education (school, family, community), and (5) cultivation of ethical digital literacy. The implications of this research emphasize the need for reorienting educational policies and learning practices that synergistically combine the power of noble moral values with technological advancements, to shape a generation that is not only digitally competent but also of noble character.*

Keywords: *Moral Education, Digital Era, Character, Ethical Digital Literacy, Educational Revitalization*

Introduction

The rapid development of the digital era has fundamentally transformed patterns of social interaction, communication, and access to information. Digital technology offers unprecedented opportunities for learning, collaboration, and the democratization of knowledge. At the same time, however, it presents a paradoxical consequence: while expanding intellectual horizons, it also generates complex challenges for individual moral development, particularly among students (Rokhman, Syaifudin, & Yuliati, 2020). Moral degradation increasingly manifests in digital spaces through the proliferation of hate speech, violations of privacy, plagiarism, and excessive gadget use that diminishes the quality of direct social interaction. Social media platforms, driven by algorithmic systems that amplify echo chambers and

sensational content, further contribute to the erosion of values such as politeness, respect for diversity, and commitment to truth (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). These conditions reveal a widening gap between technological sophistication and the moral maturity of its users. Consequently, conventional approaches to moral education are no longer sufficient and require revitalization to remain relevant and effective in addressing contemporary realities.

This study is grounded in several fundamental concerns. It seeks to examine the current condition and challenges of implementing moral education within the digital context, to analyze why revitalization has become a strategic necessity amid rapid technological advancement, and to explore effective and integrative models for implementing moral education within the digital ecosystem. These concerns reflect the urgency of repositioning moral education as a central response to digital transformation rather than as a peripheral educational agenda.

The objectives of this research are to critically analyze the urgency and challenges of revitalizing moral education in the digital era, to formulate conceptual and practical strategies for strengthening moral education by engaging constructively with digital dynamics, and to develop an implementation framework accompanied by policy recommendations that can be adopted by educational stakeholders. Theoretically, this research contributes to the enrichment of character and moral education scholarship through a digital perspective and offers an integrative conceptual framework. Practically, it is expected to serve as a reference for educators, parents, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing and implementing contextual and impactful moral education programs suited to the digital age.

Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, moral education (*tarbiyah al-akhlāq*) occupies a central and foundational position in the educational process. The term *akhlak* (*al-khuluq*) refers to a deeply rooted inner disposition that manifests consistently in outward behavior (al-Ghazali, 2000). Unlike ethics, which tends to be philosophical and theoretical, *akhlak* emphasizes the internalization of values so that virtuous conduct emerges spontaneously and sincerely. The ultimate aim of moral education is the formation of *insan kāmil*, a morally integrated individual committed

to divine and humanitarian values such as honesty (al-shidq), trustworthiness, humility (tawadhu'), compassion (rahmah), and justice (Lickona, 1991). This process transcends cognitive instruction and encompasses habituation (al-'adah), exemplary modeling (al-qudwah), and the cultivation of a supportive moral environment (al-bī'ah).

In the broader national context, morality forms the foundation of character education and the strengthening of human resources. A resilient national character is built upon individuals who possess integrity, responsibility, and social awareness (Megawangi, 2010). Core moral values such as honesty, discipline, and cooperation constitute the basis for a harmonious, democratic, and corruption-resistant society. Therefore, revitalizing moral education is not solely a religious imperative but also a strategic national endeavor aimed at safeguarding younger generations from identity crises and moral decline that threaten social cohesion.

The digital era itself is characterized by hyperconnectivity, rapid information flows, media convergence, and the expansion of virtual spaces that increasingly intersect with physical reality (Castells, 2010). The democratization of knowledge enables individuals to function simultaneously as producers and consumers of content. However, these developments also foster a culture of instant gratification, constant distraction, and fragmented attention. Digital spaces have become arenas of value contestation in which diverse ideologies compete without traditional filters, requiring users to exercise critical discernment and moral intelligence.

Such transformations generate distinctive moral challenges. The dissonance between online and offline identities can encourage inauthentic behavior and fragmented self-concepts. The online disinhibition effect—where anonymity and physical distance reduce empathy and personal accountability—facilitates behaviors such as cyberbullying and trolling (Suler, 2004). Furthermore, information overload and the spread of misinformation demand intellectual morality characterized by verification, prudence, and commitment to truth. The engagement-driven logic of digital algorithms often prioritizes provocative content over virtuous discourse, thereby complicating moral development within digital environments.

In response to these realities, the revitalization of moral education must be understood as an adaptive and transformative strategy within the digital ecosystem. Revitalization entails not merely strengthening existing practices but renewing paradigms, approaches, methods, and media to enhance effectiveness in a hybrid physical-digital environment. An integrative framework is therefore required—one that unites universal and contextual moral values, applies digital pedagogical principles while preserving the essence of exemplary conduct, and fosters collaboration among families, schools, communities, and digital platforms. Through a holistic approach that addresses cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and spiritual dimensions, moral education can meaningfully respond to the complexities of contemporary life and contribute to the formation of morally grounded individuals in the digital era.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design with an exploratory-analytical library research approach. The qualitative paradigm is considered appropriate because this research seeks to develop an in-depth, comprehensive, and contextual understanding of the revitalization of moral education within the digital era. Through library research, the study examines and interprets relevant academic and empirical texts to construct a coherent conceptual framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach enables the researcher to explore theoretical foundations, identify emerging patterns of thought, and critically synthesize diverse scholarly perspectives related to moral and character education in contemporary digital contexts.

The material object of this research is moral education, while the formal object concerns strategies for revitalizing moral education in the digital era. The primary data sources consist of scholarly literature, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and research reports that discuss character education, moral philosophy, Islamic ethics, educational technology, and digital literacy. Secondary sources include educational policy documents, institutional reports, and relevant

regulatory frameworks that support the contextual analysis of moral education practices within the broader educational system.

Data were collected through documentation techniques, which involved systematically tracing, identifying, selecting, and organizing relevant written sources from reputable academic databases and digital repositories such as Google Scholar, ERIC, SCOPUS, and institutional digital libraries. The search process was conducted using carefully structured keyword combinations, including “moral education,” “digital age,” “character education,” “Islamic ethics,” and “digital literacy.” The inclusion of these keywords was intended to ensure comprehensive coverage of both normative-theoretical and practical-empirical discussions related to the research focus.

The collected data were analyzed using content analysis and conceptual analysis methods. Content analysis was applied to identify key themes, arguments, and patterns across the selected literature, while conceptual analysis was used to clarify and integrate core concepts relevant to the revitalization of moral education. The analytical process involved data reduction through the selection of essential concepts and significant findings, systematic presentation of data in narrative form, and the drawing of conclusions supported by continuous verification. Source triangulation was employed to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings by comparing perspectives from multiple scholarly sources (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The overall analysis was conducted thematically in accordance with the research objectives and conceptual framework developed in this study.

Result and Discussion

challenges of moral education in the digital era: a critical analysis

The digital ecosystem, particularly social media, has fundamentally reshaped the architecture of public space where moral values are constructed, negotiated, and enacted. This environment is constantly connected and transcends geographical boundaries, blurring the traditional distinction between private and public domains (boyd, 2014). As a result, new ethical challenges emerge, including excessive

oversharing of personal life and the normalization of large-scale social surveillance. Platform algorithms designed to maximize engagement and screen time systematically prioritize provocative, emotionally charged, and often divisive content because such content most effectively captures attention (Zuboff, 2019). This algorithmic logic indirectly cultivates a public culture that weakens moral values such as patience (*al-shabr*), thoughtful deliberation, and respect for factual accuracy in discourse.

The culture of virality and cancel culture further disrupts foundational moral concepts such as justice and wisdom. Cancel culture frequently involves collective judgment and social punishment based on isolated actions or statements, without adequate space for clarification, remorse, or restorative processes (Clark, 2020). This phenomenon conflicts with Islamic moral principles such as forgiveness (*al-'afw*), repentance (*al-tawbah*), and concealing faults (*satr al-'awrah*). The speed at which outrage spreads reduces complex human realities into simplified black-and-white narratives, impeding the development of mature moral reasoning among students. In this sense, the digital environment may function as a hidden curriculum that subtly transmits values contrary to those intentionally cultivated within formal education.

The digital era is also marked by the democratization of information, which simultaneously fragments moral authority. Traditional moral educators teachers, parents, and religious leaders now compete with influencers, content creators, and anonymous online communities for influence over young minds (Istiningsih & Hasbullah, 2015). This fragmentation produces a crisis of exemplary conduct, not merely because of the abundance of role models, but because contradictions between preached values and observable digital behavior are easily exposed. Students can witness inconsistencies between moral teachings and actual online conduct, undermining the credibility of moral authority.

Moreover, the performative and fragmented nature of digital identity complicates the concept of *al-qudwah* (exemplary conduct), which in classical moral education requires consistency between belief, speech, and action. Digital platforms allow individuals to curate multiple identities across contexts (Turkle, 2015), enabling

separation between online behavior and real-world consequences. This psychological distance may encourage selective morality and erode integrity. Students socialized in such environments risk internalizing the idea that morality is situational rather than intrinsic and consistent.

Another significant challenge arises from digital consumerism and hedonism fostered by the attention economy. Users' data, time, and attention become commodified, linking self-worth and happiness to external validation metrics such as likes, shares, and followers (Han, 2015). This dynamic conflicts with moral values emphasizing inner contentment (*qana'ah*), simplicity (*zuhd*), and gratitude (*al-shukr*). The culture of endless scrolling and algorithm-driven entertainment further promotes instant gratification over perseverance and disciplined striving (Carr, 2010). Values such as diligence (*al-ijtihad*) and moral self-restraint (*al-mujahadah*) become increasingly difficult to cultivate within structures designed to stimulate constant desire and consumption.

At the root of many of these challenges lies a deficiency in ethical digital literacy. Digital literacy is often reduced to technical competence, such as operating devices or navigating software. However, ethical digital literacy—understood as the capacity to act responsibly, critically, and normatively in digital environments—is far more essential (Ribble & Bailey, 2007). Many students are technologically proficient yet lack awareness of intellectual property ethics, privacy protection, and information verification. They may easily engage in plagiarism, share private conversations without consent, or disseminate misinformation due to insufficient critical evaluation skills (Wineburg et al., 2016). Without integrating ethical digital literacy into moral education, technologically skilled individuals risk becoming morally unanchored in digital spaces.

strategies for revitalizing moral education: an integrative framework

Revitalizing moral education requires a comprehensive reorientation of curriculum and pedagogy. Moral values must be systematically infused into digital-based learning activities across subjects rather than confined to isolated lessons (Lickona, 1991). This infusion strategy connects abstract values to concrete digital

dilemmas. For instance, language lessons may integrate ethical online communication, while science instruction may emphasize intellectual honesty and responsible citation of digital sources. Beyond formal curriculum, attention must be given to hidden curricula through participatory technology-use policies and norms for respectful virtual interaction. National competency standards should explicitly incorporate ethical digital literacy and socio-emotional competencies as learning outcomes (Kemendikbud, 2017).

Digital media itself should be utilized as a constructive vehicle for moral education. Multimodal formats videos, interactive simulations, educational games, and social media campaigns can engage digital-native learners effectively (Huda et al., 2020). Online discussion platforms within Learning Management Systems can function as laboratories for practicing respectful dialogue, evidence-based argumentation, and constructive conflict resolution. When actively facilitated, digital spaces can transform from distractions into tools for moral internalization.

Teachers remain central actors in this revitalization. Their competencies must extend beyond Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) to encompass ethical integration within technology-based instruction (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Professional development should equip teachers with knowledge of adolescent digital psychology, strategies for addressing ethical dilemmas, and methods for evaluating moral growth in online contexts. Equally crucial is teachers' cultivation of their own digital identity as moral exemplars. Practicing respectful communication, responsible information sharing, and reflective engagement online strengthens the authenticity of moral instruction (Sari & Prasetyo, 2021).

Collaboration among schools, families, and digital communities is indispensable. Schools must partner with parents through digital parenting programs that promote guidance rather than authoritarian restriction (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020). Community organizations and religious institutions can contextualize digital moral education, while technology industries should be encouraged to design youth-protective features and support ethical digital initiatives (Subianto, 2020).

National digital literacy movements must explicitly emphasize digital ethics grounded in universal moral principles and local wisdom.

A value-based digital literacy framework integrates technical competencies with core moral values. Critical information literacy aligns with truthfulness (*al-shidq*); communication literacy reflects ethical speech (*adab al-kalam*); digital security embodies trustworthiness (*al-amanah*); and content creation encourages beneficial contribution (*al-naf'u*) (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017). Such integration ensures that digital literacy education nurtures both competence and character.

Implementation and digital-based moral education models

Operationalizing revitalization strategies requires innovative pedagogical models. The flipped classroom model for character education enables students to study foundational moral concepts through digital media independently, while synchronous sessions focus on moral dilemma discussions and reflective activities (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Project-based digital citizenship engages students in initiatives such as anti-cyberbullying campaigns or digital ethics guides, fostering responsibility and collaboration. Moral dilemma discussions grounded in developmental theory stimulate higher-order moral reasoning and ethical reflection (Nucci & Ilten-Gee, 2021).

Sustained progress depends on documenting and disseminating best practices. Programs integrating digital ethics into national curricula, initiatives within pesantren that manage social media productively (Salahudin et al., 2022), and reflective digital platforms promoting gratitude and empathy illustrate adaptable models. Documentation through reports, multimedia resources, and open educational materials enhances scalability.

Evaluation systems must adopt authentic and continuous approaches. Observation of online interactions, digital reflective portfolios, project-based assessments, peer evaluations, and narrative feedback from parents provide holistic indicators of moral development (Amin, 2019). Such multi-method assessment prioritizes behavioral transformation over rote knowledge.

theoretical and practical implications of revitalizing moral education in the digital era

Theoretically, revitalizing moral education necessitates interdisciplinary convergence. Classical Islamic moral philosophy must dialogue with digital sociology, cyberpsychology, media studies, and critical pedagogy to formulate frameworks such as “Cyber-Akhlak” or digital moral pedagogy (Kember & Zylinska, 2012). This integration reexamines concepts such as *fitrah* and *amar ma’ruf nahi munkar* within algorithmically mediated public spheres and adapts moral development theories to digitally mediated interaction.

Policy implications include revising national education standards to embed ethical digital literacy and socio-emotional competencies within graduate outcomes. Teacher professional development programs must prioritize digital moral education, while technology policies should emphasize value integration and restorative approaches to digital ethics violations. Institutional guidelines should support collaborative partnerships among schools, families, communities, and technology stakeholders.

Practically, educators must shift from resistance to adaptive-critical engagement with technology. Teachers serve not merely as instructors but as facilitators and co-learners guiding moral reflection within complex digital realities. Professional learning communities can support collaborative innovation. Schools must create enabling environments that provide resources, time, and recognition for moral education initiatives.

Ultimately, revitalizing moral education in the digital era requires a systemic, collaborative, and sustained commitment. Through integrative frameworks, innovative pedagogies, authentic evaluation, and supportive policy structures, moral education can remain resilient and transformative within contemporary digital life.

Conclusion

Revitalizing moral education in the digital era is not merely an educational reform agenda but an urgent and strategic necessity. The moral challenges emerging from digital spaces—ranging from algorithm-driven value distortion, fragmented

authority, digital consumerism, to low ethical digital literacy—are systemic and structurally embedded within contemporary life. As previously discussed (boyd, 2014; Zuboff, 2019; Ribble & Bailey, 2007), these challenges cannot be addressed through partial or reactive measures. Instead, they demand a comprehensive and transformative educational response grounded in both enduring moral principles and contextual digital awareness.

Revitalization must therefore be understood as an integrative effort that bridges timeless universal values—such as honesty (al-shidq), responsibility (amanah), justice (‘adl), gratitude (al-shukr), and self-restraint (al-mujahadah)—with contemporary pedagogical approaches and digital learning environments. Moral education in the digital era cannot rely solely on normative instruction; it must involve curriculum integration (Lickona, 1991), ethical digital literacy development (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017), strengthened teacher capacity (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), and authentic evaluation systems that assess behavioral transformation rather than theoretical comprehension alone (Amin, 2019).

Its effectiveness ultimately depends on the collective commitment of the entire educational ecosystem schools, families, communities, policymakers, and even technology industries to adapt critically, innovate responsibly, and collaborate sustainably. Only through such systemic synergy can moral education continue to shape individuals who are not merely digitally competent, but morally grounded and socially responsible amidst ongoing digital disruption.

Reference

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