



Internalization of Character Education Values Through Civic Education Learning in the Digital Era: Strategies and Multidimensional Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the process of internalizing character education values through Civic Education learning in the digital era, focusing on strategies and multidimensional collaboration in the school environment. The background of this research lies in the growing challenges of moral degradation and the decline of students' social awareness due to excessive digital exposure. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the study collected data through interviews, observations, and documentation in a junior high school context. The findings indicate that teachers play a central role in integrating character values by combining digital learning platforms with contextual moral instruction. The use of digital media such as interactive videos, online discussions, and collaborative projects enhances students' participation and strengthens their understanding of civic and ethical responsibilities. However, the study also found obstacles such as limited digital literacy among teachers and the inconsistent implementation of value-based learning. It is concluded that effective internalization of character education in the digital era requires synergy between teachers, parents, and the educational community supported by strong digital competence and moral guidance.

1. Introduction

Education in the digital era is experiencing a significant paradigm shift. The development of information and communication technology has influenced every aspect of human life, including the educational system and learning culture (Prensky, 2010). Digital technology offers unlimited access to knowledge and learning resources, yet it also presents complex challenges to students' moral and ethical development. As learners become more exposed to social media, online

gaming, and digital interactions, schools face the growing task of strengthening moral reasoning and social awareness through systematic and value-based education (Sari & Wulandari, 2021). In this context, character education emerges as an essential component in preparing students to become responsible digital citizens. Recent studies emphasize that digital environments require structured moral guidance to prevent value erosion and promote responsible civic behavior among students (Samiha & Fauzi, 2025).

Civic Education (Civics) is a strategic subject for internalizing character values by providing not only civic knowledge but also ethical and responsible social guidance (Alldred & Fox, 2019). Character education emphasizes the development of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action to ensure value internalization (Lickona, 1991). In the digital age, Civics becomes increasingly relevant as learning shifts online, where moral supervision is limited, and empirical studies confirm its central role in fostering responsibility, discipline, and social awareness (Siregar et al., 2020; Permadi & Achadi, 2025).

Various studies have shown that the effectiveness of character education depends on the extent to which teachers can integrate moral values into daily learning activities. The integration process should not only rely on explicit moral instruction but also on implicit value transmission through modeling, reflection, and dialogue (Megawangi, 2014; Gunawan et al., 2022). However, the digital transformation of education has shifted the learning environment from a teacher-centered to a student-centered model, supported by digital tools such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), interactive platforms, and educational social media. This shift creates both opportunities and challenges for Civic Education teachers to convey character values effectively (Yuliana et al., 2022). Well-designed digital learning models, when aligned with character education goals, can strengthen students' moral reasoning and civic competence rather than weaken them (Wahyuni & Dipuja, 2025).

In many cases, the excessive use of digital devices among students has resulted in a decline in empathy, social interaction, and civic engagement (Wardani & Prasetyo, 2019). Learners are more likely to spend time online rather than engage in real social experiences that nurture empathy and responsibility. Therefore, the main challenge for Civic Education is to recontextualize moral learning in the digital ecosystem. Teachers are now required to adapt teaching methods and strategies to digital platforms without losing the essence of moral and civic instruction. This includes the use of interactive learning media, virtual discussions, project-based learning, and digital storytelling, which can help stimulate students' critical thinking and moral awareness (Fatmawati & Sulaiman, 2021). Contextual and value-oriented digital learning approaches have been proven effective in reconnecting civic learning with students' real-life social responsibilities (Yudistira et al., 2025).

Moreover, the success of character education in the digital context requires multidimensional collaboration. The role of parents, school administrators, and the community must complement teachers' efforts to ensure the holistic formation of

students' moral values. Collaboration between families and schools can prevent moral disorientation and strengthen the consistency of value reinforcement both in the classroom and at home (Kusumawati & Putra, 2022; Paska Sriulina Tarigan et al., 2025). In this regard, Civic Education functions not only as a school subject but also as a platform for moral development and social participation in the digital society (Armianti, Yunita, et al., 2024). School leadership and institutional support play a crucial role in sustaining character education by strengthening teachers' digital and pedagogical competencies (Rini & Lestari, 2025).

Research on the integration of digital media in Civic Education shows varied results. While some studies highlight the potential of technology to increase engagement and interactivity, others warn of the risk of superficial learning and reduced personal connection between teachers and students (Nugraha & Adi, 2020). The balance between moral formation and digital innovation must therefore be carefully maintained. The effectiveness of Civic Education in this era depends on how teachers design digital learning that encourages reflective and ethical behavior rather than merely technical competence.

From a pedagogical perspective, the internalization of values is a continuous process that involves cognition, affection, and behavior (Lickona, 2022). Teachers act as facilitators and role models who guide students to understand, appreciate, and practice moral values in their daily lives. In the digital context, this process can be strengthened through multimedia learning that allows simulation of social situations, virtual discussions on ethical dilemmas, and online civic projects that engage students in real community issues. These approaches not only improve learning motivation but also bridge the gap between digital literacy and moral responsibility (Suwandi et al., 2021).

Despite its potential, several challenges still hinder the optimal internalization of character education in digital-based learning. Among these are teachers' limited digital literacy, lack of technical facilities, and inconsistent curriculum implementation. Many teachers still focus on cognitive aspects of Civic Education without giving sufficient attention to moral reflection and behavioral outcomes (Hidayat, 2022). Furthermore, digital media sometimes distracts students from moral learning when it is not properly guided. Therefore, innovation in teaching strategies and professional development for teachers are crucial to sustain character education in the current educational landscape.

This research is conducted to explore how character education values can be effectively internalized through Civic Education learning in the digital era. It aims to analyze the strategies employed by teachers, the patterns of collaboration among educational stakeholders, and the challenges encountered during the process. By understanding these aspects, the study seeks to provide insights and practical recommendations for improving the integration of moral and digital education in schools (Humaeroh & Dewi, 2021). Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on how educational institutions can preserve moral values while embracing the opportunities of digital transformation.

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at exploring how character education values are internalized through Civic Education learning in the digital era. The qualitative design was chosen to provide a deep understanding of the social and educational context, emphasizing the interpretation of meaning rather than numerical measurement (Creswell, 2014). Through this approach, the researcher sought to describe and interpret the strategies, patterns of collaboration, and challenges experienced by teachers and students during the process of integrating character values in digital-based learning environments. The research was conducted at a junior high school that had implemented digital learning platforms to support Civic Education classes. This location was selected because it represents a typical example of how schools adapt their character education programs within digital learning ecosystems.

The qualitative method is suitable for this study since it allows researchers to understand how social interactions, teaching strategies, and digital media contribute to moral value formation in schools. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative research emphasizes understanding phenomena in their natural settings, interpreting how people make sense of their experiences, and uncovering patterns within social contexts. This approach enabled the researcher to analyze not only the outcomes of learning but also the processes, behaviors, and relationships that shaped the implementation of Civic Education in the digital era.

Instrument

The main instrument in this research was the researcher herself, who acted as a data collector, observer, and interpreter of field phenomena. In qualitative studies, the researcher functions as the primary tool for data gathering because understanding and interpretation depend on human sensitivity to the context being studied (Miles et al., 2014). Supporting instruments included interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation checklists. The interview guide consisted of semi-structured questions designed to explore teachers' strategies in integrating character values, students' responses to digital-based Civic Education, and the forms of collaboration among stakeholders. Observation sheets were used to record classroom activities, learning interactions, and the use of digital media during lessons. Documentation such as lesson plans, student assignments, and digital materials were also analyzed to support the triangulation of data. The selection of instruments was based on their relevance to the research objectives and the nature of qualitative inquiry. Using multiple tools allowed for a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The combination of interviews, observation, and documentation helped the researcher to validate findings through cross-checking and ensure data credibility.

Data Collection

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: interviews, observations, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with

Civic Education teachers, students, and school administrators who were directly involved in digital-based learning activities. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility for respondents to elaborate their experiences while maintaining focus on the research topic. Interviews covered themes such as teachers' preparation, methods of integrating moral values, challenges in using digital media, and students' engagement during online or blended learning sessions.

Observations were conducted in Civic Education classrooms to record the interaction patterns between teachers and students, the use of digital learning tools, and the ways moral values were communicated throughout the teaching process. The researcher observed both in-person and virtual sessions to capture different learning dynamics. Documentation techniques included reviewing teaching materials, digital platforms used by teachers, school policies, and student work that reflected moral or civic themes. All data were collected over two months, ensuring that the researcher captured the consistency and variability of value internalization practices within the school's digital environment.

The data collection process adhered to ethical research principles. Before conducting interviews and observations, the researcher obtained informed consent from participants and school administrators. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. The research also complied with institutional guidelines for conducting educational fieldwork, ensuring that all participants voluntarily took part in the process. Additionally, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2016), which includes three concurrent stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher organized and simplified the collected data by coding and categorizing key themes relevant to the research focus. These categories included digital learning strategies, teacher–student interactions, collaboration models, and emerging challenges. Data display was conducted by arranging the information into descriptive narratives, tables, and conceptual matrices to visualize relationships among categories. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn and verified through continuous reflection and triangulation among data sources.

Triangulation was performed by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and document analysis. The researcher ensured that findings from different sources supported each other, thus enhancing validity. Peer debriefing was also conducted with fellow researchers and academic advisors to refine interpretations and minimize potential bias. The qualitative data analysis process was cyclical and iterative, meaning that analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection to allow emerging insights to guide subsequent steps in the research process. The analytical process ultimately aimed to describe how character education values were embedded within digital Civic Education practices and to identify the critical

factors that influenced the success or failure of this integration. By combining in-depth data collection and systematic analysis, this study ensured that the findings accurately reflected the real experiences of teachers and students in adapting moral learning to the digital context.

3. Results and Discussion

Results

The findings of this study indicate that the integration of character education values through Civic Education in the digital era has a significant influence on the learning process, especially in developing students' moral awareness, digital responsibility, and civic engagement. Data obtained from interviews, classroom observations, and documentation reveal that teachers play a central role in embedding moral values using digital tools and pedagogical innovations that engage students in active and reflective learning.

Teachers at the studied school were able to internalize values such as honesty, discipline, cooperation, and respect through digital-based lessons. Various learning platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and WhatsApp groups were used to facilitate discussions, online reflections, and collaborative projects. Teachers designed interactive activities such as digital storytelling, video creation, and virtual debates about civic issues. For instance, when teaching about social tolerance, students were asked to create short videos illustrating examples of respectful communication in online spaces. These activities allowed students not only to understand moral concepts but also to apply them in their digital interactions.

Observations showed that students' participation increased significantly when digital media were integrated into Civic Education lessons. The visual and interactive nature of digital platforms encouraged students to express their ideas more openly. Even students who were usually passive in traditional classrooms became more involved in discussions through online chat features and virtual polls. Teachers noted that digital learning helped cultivate a sense of responsibility and creativity among students while providing opportunities for authentic assessment. In addition to classroom activities, digital applications such as the School Budget and Activity Planning Application (ARKAS) contributed indirectly to promoting accountability and transparency within the school community. Teachers and administrators modeled ethical behavior in managing digital records and reporting, which strengthened a culture of integrity in the institution. The consistent use of digital tools for both learning and management created an ecosystem where honesty and responsibility became shared values among teachers and students.

However, several challenges were observed during implementation. Some teachers struggled to adapt to digital technologies, particularly in designing value-oriented online learning activities. Limited digital literacy among teachers and unstable internet connections were major obstacles that hindered consistent learning engagement. Students from lower-income families often had limited access to

devices, resulting in unequal participation. Moreover, the absence of direct supervision in online settings sometimes led to reduced focus and misinterpretation of moral lessons.

Despite these obstacles, the implementation of character education in Civic Education through digital means demonstrated positive outcomes overall. The combination of face-to-face and virtual activities known as hybrid learning proved effective in maintaining emotional bonds between teachers and students. Teachers were able to contextualize moral messages in both physical and digital environments, helping students connect abstract values with real-world behaviors. Figure 1 below presents an example of students' digital learning activities related to Civic Education projects.

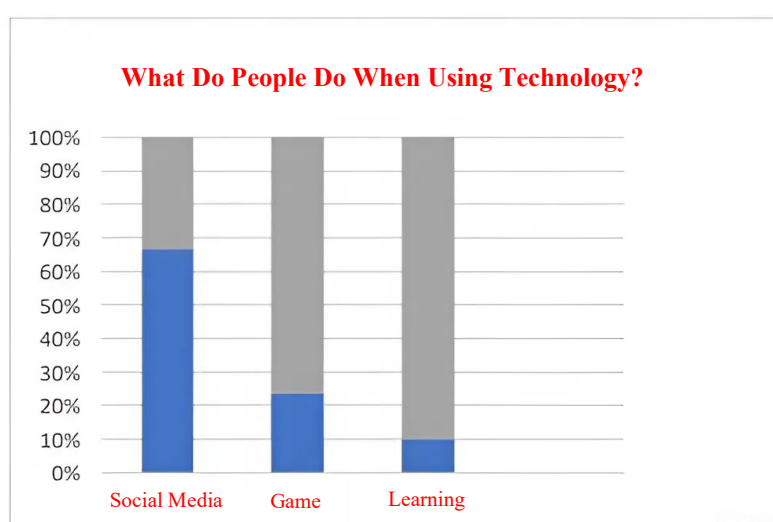


Figure 1. Students' Digital Learning Activities

The chart titled "Activities Performed When Using Technology" illustrates the distribution of students' technological engagement across three categories: social media, gaming, and learning. The findings indicate that social media constitutes the most dominant activity, accounting for approximately 65% of students' technology use. Gaming follows at around 25%, reflecting a moderate level of recreational engagement. In contrast, the use of technology for learning purposes is notably low, with only about 10% of students reporting such usage. These results suggest that students primarily utilize technology for entertainment and social interaction rather than academic purposes. This pattern highlights the need for more intentional efforts from educators and schools to integrate technology meaningfully into learning activities, ensuring that digital tools support not only leisure but also cognitive and academic development.

Discussion

The findings above highlight that digital learning can serve as a powerful medium for the internalization of character values when guided by proper pedagogical strategies. The study reinforces the view of Lickona (1991) that moral education

must not only focus on knowledge but also on habituation and emotional engagement. By combining digital media with value-based instruction, teachers provide experiential learning opportunities where students practice moral reasoning and ethical decision-making in realistic contexts.

The effectiveness of this approach can be explained through the concept of *blended moral pedagogy*, which integrates digital tools with face-to-face reflection. Teachers who applied interactive digital strategies such as online debates, digital storytelling, and project-based collaboration helped students develop both cognitive understanding and affective commitment toward moral values. These results are consistent with the findings of Fatmawati and Sulaiman (2021), who emphasized that digital citizenship education enhances empathy and critical thinking when it is combined with guided moral discussions.

Another important finding is the emergence of accountability and transparency as secondary outcomes of digital character education. The integration of digital applications like ARKAS cultivated a school culture that values honesty and efficiency. This finding resonates with Kumurur, Rotinsulu, and Walewangko (2019), who argue that digital governance in education can foster ethical behavior and institutional integrity. When students are exposed to systems that prioritize openness and accountability, they indirectly learn the importance of ethical responsibility in professional and civic life.

However, the study also underscores that digital transformation alone does not guarantee moral development. As noted by Nisa et al. (2024), digital literacy levels among teachers and students critically determine the success of moral instruction in virtual environments. Teachers who lack digital competence may find it difficult to translate moral concepts into engaging digital activities. Therefore, continuous professional development is needed to enhance teachers' ability to use technology for ethical learning. Schools should provide structured training that integrates moral pedagogy with digital innovation, ensuring that technology supports not replaces the human aspects of education.

The multidimensional collaboration observed in this study further strengthens the notion that character education in the digital age requires collective participation. Parental involvement through digital communication platforms, such as WhatsApp groups or online meetings, was found to reinforce consistency between school and home values. This aligns with the findings of Kusumawati and Putra (2022), who assert that moral education is most effective when family and school share responsibility for character formation. Similarly, community engagement in digital civic projects extends learning beyond the classroom, making moral instruction more relevant to real-life contexts.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study extends the discourse on the role of Civic Education in promoting digital citizenship. As stated by Prensky (2010), students in the modern era are "digital natives" who interact and form identities in online environments. Therefore, Civic Education must evolve from traditional moral instruction toward fostering ethical participation in digital spaces. The present study

confirms that integrating moral reasoning into digital activities encourages students to reflect critically on their behaviors, interactions, and responsibilities as citizens of a connected world.

Furthermore, the study reveals a new dimension of teacher professionalism in the digital era. Teachers not only serve as moral guides but also as digital mentors who model ethical technology use. This dual role requires a balance between technical skills and emotional intelligence. As emphasized by Rahman and Saputra (2022), educational innovation can succeed only when supported by ethical leadership and collaborative school culture. The findings of this study illustrate that schools with visionary leadership and open communication are more successful in embedding character education within digital practices.

The discussion also highlights several implications. Practically, schools should integrate moral education into every aspect of digital learning design. Lesson plans should not only focus on academic goals but also embed moral reflection components such as self-assessment, peer feedback, and online behavior guidelines. Policymakers must ensure that digital education policies are aligned with ethical and civic objectives, promoting holistic human development rather than mere technological efficiency.

Theoretically, the results strengthen the relevance of moral education frameworks in contemporary digital learning. The integration of Lickona's (1991) cognitive-affective-behavioral model with the concept of digital ethics creates a comprehensive approach to character formation in the 21st century. This hybrid framework bridges traditional moral pedagogy with digital literacy, fostering a generation of learners who are both technologically competent and morally grounded. Finally, the study contributes to the growing body of literature emphasizing that effective digital character education depends on synergy between pedagogical innovation, technological adaptation, and community participation. When these three dimensions interact harmoniously, schools can cultivate students who are not only skilled in navigating digital tools but also guided by strong ethical and civic values. This holistic integration marks a crucial step toward realizing education that is both modern and morally meaningful.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the internalization of character education values through Civic Education in the digital era requires a strategic combination of pedagogical innovation, digital adaptation, and multidimensional collaboration. The integration of technology in moral learning has proven effective in increasing students' engagement, reflective thinking, and moral awareness when guided by teachers who are digitally competent and ethically grounded. Digital platforms such as online discussions, video projects, and interactive media not only enhance cognitive understanding but also provide spaces for moral practice and civic responsibility.

However, the success of digital character education largely depends on teachers' ability to design meaningful learning experiences, institutional support, and the active participation of parents and communities. Schools must strengthen teachers' digital literacy and ethical competence through continuous professional development programs. Moreover, education policymakers should ensure that the digitalization of learning aligns with the core mission of character formation and civic education. In essence, Civic Education in the digital era is not merely about adapting to technological change but about redefining moral education to address the ethical challenges of the 21st century. The synergy between technological innovation and moral cultivation will determine the success of future educational transformation toward creating responsible, empathetic, and ethical digital citizens. This condition requires Civic Education to serve as a reflective space where students critically engage with digital realities while internalizing core civic and moral values. Ultimately, the success of education in the digital era depends not only on technological proficiency but also on the depth of moral internalization fostered through Civic Education.

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