

# Revitalizing Religious Education as an Ethical Foundation for Transforming Student Character in the Digital Era

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**Abstract:** Amidst the massive flow of technological transformation, the world of education faces an anomaly in the form of ethical disparity, where students' digital technical skills are not accompanied by adequate moral maturity. This article examines the urgency of revitalizing religious education as an ethical anchor to mitigate character degradation in cyberspace, such as cyberbullying, hoaxes, and the loss of empathy. Using a qualitative approach through library research and content analysis, this study dissects the phenomenon of digital deindividuation that often erodes students' self-control due to anonymity in cyberspace. The theoretical framework used integrates Media Ecology Theory, Virtue Ethics, and Critical Pedagogy. The results of the study indicate that the revitalization of religious education must address three fundamental aspects: (1) curriculum reconstruction through the development of contextual Digital Fiqh, (2) pedagogical transformation from an indoctrination pattern to a dialogical-reflective one, and (3) strengthening self-filtering mechanisms based on transcendental awareness (Ihsan). This article concludes that progressive religious education serves not only as a ritual transfer of knowledge, but as a moral operating system that equips students with digital empathy and integrity. The synergy between teacher role models, an adaptive curriculum, and religious internal controls is key to producing digital citizens who excel intellectually and have strong character.

**Keywords:** Revitalization of Religious Education, Digital Character, Cyber Ethics, Transformative Pedagogy, Religious Literacy.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The digital era seems to be dragging our civilization into a realm of reality that was initially difficult for reason to grasp. The massive flow of technological transformation has not only disrupted patterns of interaction but also reshaped the foundations of moral consciousness and behavior among global society, especially the younger generation. This phenomenon has triggered an anomaly: amidst unrestricted access to information, an increasingly worrying ethical vacuum has emerged in the cyberspace.

This anxiety isn't simply the result of prejudice, but rather is based on very real empirical facts. According to the Digital 2024 Global Overview Report by We Are Social and Meltwater, there are currently more than 5.35 billion people globally active online, equivalent to 66.2% of the global population. On average, each person allocates approximately 6 hours and 40 minutes per day to staying connected to the virtual world.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Kemp, *DIGITAL 2024: GLOBAL OVERVIEW REPORT (2024)*, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>.

These figures emphasize that the digital world has become a second home for students. However, even more alarming statistics emerge from the behavioral aspect.<sup>2</sup>The Microsoft Digital Civility Index (DCI) report consistently signals dangers related to online risks such as hoaxes, hate speech, and rampant discriminatory practices, where teenagers are often trapped as both actors and victims in the vortex of these toxic interactions.<sup>3</sup>

In the Indonesian education sector, this challenge is increasingly pressing. As a nation with a massive surge in social media users, the vulnerability to character degradation poses a real threat to moral sovereignty.<sup>4</sup>Students are now bombarded with a stream of information that crosses geographical boundaries, but ironically, this often contradicts the noble values and foundations of religious norms.<sup>5</sup>

The visible gap today is the emergence of an ethical disparity between the technical skills of operating gadgets and the moral maturity of their users.<sup>6</sup>Students may be very adept at managing algorithms, but often get lost in sorting out what is truth and what is merely chasing popularity.<sup>7</sup>It is at this point that the urgency to overhaul the position of religious education in the modern curriculum becomes crucial.

Religious instruction in formal schools has tended to stagnate, focusing solely on cognitive-textual approaches. Learning focuses more on memorizing rituals and formal laws, which feel disconnected from the pulse of students' digital lives.<sup>8</sup>As a result, religion is often perceived as a foreign entity that is disconnected from their daily routines when interacting on social media.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, a comprehensive revitalization is needed. Revitalization here does not mean tinkering with the basic doctrines of faith, but rather refreshing the methodology, approach, and reinterpretation of religious values to make them relevant to the challenges of the times.<sup>10</sup>Religious education must be restored to its role as an ethical anchor that provides definite direction amidst a storm of misleading misinformation.

The resilience of students in the digital age cannot be developed simply through a barrage of prohibitions. Integrity is born from deep reflection on transcendental values that permeate personal consciousness.<sup>11</sup>This revitalization demands that

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<sup>2</sup> Stenford Matenda and Gedala Mulliah Naidoo, "Social Media Incivility: An Investigation of the Trends and Practices among Young Students in Mthatha, Eastern Cape, South Africa," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, August 20, 2025, 1855–68, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2025697>.

<sup>3</sup> Madraximov Alisher Usubjon Ugli, "Scientific-Theoretical Foundations of the Negative Impact of Social Networks on the Moral and Ethical Upbringing of Youth," *Journal of Multidisciplinary Academic and Practice Studies* 3, no. 3 (2025): 689–98, <https://doi.org/10.35912/jomaps.v3i3.3259>.

<sup>4</sup> Luc Saulnier and Tobias Krettenauer, "Internet Impropriety: Moral Identity, Moral Disengagement, and Antisocial Online Behavior within an Early Adolescent to Young Adult Sample," *Journal of Adolescence* 95, no. 2 (2023): 264–83, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jad.12112>.

<sup>5</sup> Gianluca Mariano Colella et al., "Problematic Social Media Use, Retaliation, and Moral Disengagement in Cyberbullying and Cybervictimization Among Italian Preadolescents: A Moderated Mediation Model," *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*, ahead of print, October 24, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42380-024-00265-2>.

<sup>6</sup> Chengyan Zhu et al., "Cyberbullying Among Adolescents and Children: A Comprehensive Review of the Global Situation, Risk Factors, and Preventive Measures," *Frontiers in Public Health* 9 (March 2021): 634909, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.634909>.

<sup>7</sup> Ya-Xing Sun et al., "Moral Disengagement as Mediator and Guilt as Moderator between Cyber Moral Literacy and Cyberbullying among Late Adolescents," *Scientific Reports* 15, no. 1 (2025): 43, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-83911-5>.

<sup>8</sup> Muaddyl Akhyar et al., "The Importance of Religious Education in the Digital Era," *International Journal of Islamic Educational Research* 2, no. 1 (2025): 15–30, <https://doi.org/10.61132/ijier.v2i1.146>.

<sup>9</sup> Nabila Dwi Aprilia and Wahab Wahab, "Character-Based Education Religious Values with Challenges in the Digital Age," *Jurnal Pengabdian Nusantara* 3, no. 2 (2025): 52–56, <https://doi.org/10.32832/jpn.v3i2.83>.

<sup>10</sup> Lilis Nurhayati et al., "Integrating Digital Citizenship and Religious Moderation in Open and Distance Education: A Holistic Approach to Character Development in Indonesia," *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal* 20, no. 3 (2025): 261–76, <https://doi.org/10.1108/AAOUJ-02-2025-0025>.

<sup>11</sup> Pandu Hyangsewu et al., "IRE Teachers' Efforts to Improve Digital Literacy to Strengthen Religious Interaction towards a Good Digital Citizenship Society," *IJECA (International Journal of Education and Curriculum Application)* 7, no. 3 (2024): 359, <https://doi.org/10.31764/ijeca.v7i3.26737>.

religious education be bold enough to open up dialogue with science and technology, so that religious ethical principles can transform into an operating system in every digital activity.<sup>12</sup>

It doesn't stop there; character transformation through religion must address both emotional and spiritual aspects. In an era where self-validation is often dictated by likes and follower counts, religious education must offer a perspective on true self-worth that doesn't rely on the superficial recognition on a phone screen.<sup>13</sup>

Epistemologically, this article emphasizes that without strong ethical support from religion, character education in the digital age is merely a grandiose structure without a foundation. We are in danger of producing a generation that is intellectually brilliant but morally hollow. The crisis of integrity, the dulling of empathy in the comments section, and the normalization of digital plagiarism are stark warnings for the world of education.

One thing that needs to be emphasized is that digitalization is not the enemy of religion. Technology is essentially a neutral instrument. The main problem lies in how the human subjects behind the scenes use their freedom.<sup>14</sup> This is where religious education plays a role in building internal control or a digital conscience that remains intact even without direct monitoring from educators or parents.

The integration of religious values into digital character also includes strengthening religious moderation. In a polarized cyber world, revitalized religious education must foster inclusive attitudes, respect for differences, and prioritize ethical communication based on the principle of tabayyun (verification) to maintain social harmony.

Globally, character education is beginning to refocus on spirituality as an antidote to the rise in adolescent depression and anxiety caused by social media pressures. Progressive religious education offers inner stability through a human relationship with the Creator, which is ultimately reflected in harmonious relationships with fellow humans and their digital environment.<sup>15</sup>

Harmony between the curriculum, teacher competency, and technology utilization is needed to execute this revitalization. Religious educators must no longer be technologically illiterate; they must serve as role models for ethical conduct online. If teachers can demonstrate how patience, honesty, and compassion are demonstrated in online interactions, students will view religion as a solution to life, not simply a burden on exams.

This article will thoroughly explore tactical strategies for revitalizing religious education, from reconstructing teaching materials that are contextualized with cyber issues to implementing pedagogy that can hone students' critical thinking skills regarding the content they consume daily.

Transforming students' character is a long journey that requires a precise compass. The digital age, with all its technological glitz, still requires a touch of timeless values to ensure our humanity is not lost. Through the revitalization of religious education, we are optimistic about producing a generation of Digital Citizens who not only excel on the global stage but also possess unwavering moral integrity.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical construction in this study is anchored at the intersection of three main pillars: Digital Ecology Theory, Virtue Ethics, and the Transformation of Religious Pedagogy. Finding common ground between these three domains is vital to defining the position of religious education as a moral anchor amidst the increasingly wild vortex of technological disruption.

<sup>12</sup> Kambali Kambali et al., "Religion in Cyberspace: Islamic Religious Education in Social Media," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 01 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v12i01.3886>.

<sup>13</sup> Mahmud Yunus Daulay and Hasan Sazali, "Religious Moderation as the Spirit of Islamic Education Building Tolerance in Virtual Conflict," *FIKROTUNA: Journal of Islamic Education and Management* 14, no. 2 (2024): 178–88, <https://doi.org/10.32806/jf.v14i2.584>.

<sup>14</sup> Partono Nyanasuryanadi et al., "Mainstreaming the Value of Religious Moderation by Teachers in the Digital Era," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 15, no. 2 (2023): 1357–68, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v15i2.3198>.

<sup>15</sup> Nely Badiya Muqsonah and Mokhammad Choirul Hudha, "The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Countering the Negative Impact of Social Media on Adolescents in Pacitan," *ALSYS* 5, no. 3 (2025): 407–23, <https://doi.org/10.58578/alsys.v5i3.5510>.

First, this study's foundation rests on the Media Ecology Theory, proposed by Marshall McLuhan and later reinforced by Neil Postman. Its essence emphasizes that media is not merely a technical instrument, but rather a living environment that actively dictates human perspectives and values. In the digital ecosystem, this habitat is now omnipresent, where students no longer merely operate technology but have truly become embedded within it.<sup>16</sup> Such conditions force the birth of an ethical framework that is fluid and adaptive to the instantaneous digital world.

Within the context of character development, we should examine Deindividuation Theory in the realm of cybersocial psychology. This theory illustrates how anonymity in cyberspace can erode self-control and moral awareness. When students feel their identities are obscured behind a phone screen, their moral restraint tends to decrease, which in turn fuels unethical behavior.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, this theoretical construction positions religion as a vital instrument to revive divine consciousness (God-consciousness) as an internal control that penetrates the barriers of digital anonymity.

This research borrows the perspective of Virtue Ethics, inherited from Aristotle, and then integrates it with theological values. Unlike deontological ethics, which often gets caught up in the constraints of legalistic rules, virtue ethics places greater emphasis on strengthening character and inner spiritual tendencies.<sup>18</sup> The revitalization of religious education in this context aims to weave habituation to noble values, so that every student takes the path of virtue in virtual space not because they are afraid of sanctions, but because these values have become ingrained in their moral identity.

The Revitalization aspect theoretically refers to Paulo Freire's concept of Critical Pedagogy. According to global academic standards, education should not be merely a banking system (merely transferring information), but rather an emancipatory one. Revitalized religious education must encourage students to critically reflect on every digital content they consume, question its ethical implications, and boldly take a moral stand amidst destructive mainstream trends.<sup>19</sup>

It's also important to incorporate the concept of Digital Religious Literacy. This theory proposes that in the 21st century, religious competence is measured not only by mastery of sacred texts, but also by the ability to interpret and ground those divine messages in digital interactions. This encompasses ethics in distributing information (fathanah), intellectual honesty in citing works, and even grace when arguing in virtual public spaces.

Furthermore, this framework utilizes the Technological Determinist Theory as a point of comparison. While technology has immense power to dictate human behavior, religious education offers a perspective of Human Agency. Theoretically, this article believes that humans hold moral sovereignty to steer technology toward the common good (maslahah). Religious education equips this agency with a transcendent filter so that technology remains a servant of human values, not the other way around.

From the perspective of character transformation, Julian Rotter's Locus of Control theory is highly relevant. Students with a strong sense of internal control tend to be more accountable for their actions. Revitalized religious education aims to shift the direction of behavior from external pressures (such as algorithms or peer pressure) to internal control rooted in spiritual beliefs.<sup>20</sup> This is what we call substantive character transformation in today's digital age.

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<sup>16</sup> Norm Friesen, "Media: Digital, Ecological and Epistemological," *E-Learning and Digital Media* 8, no. 3 (2011): 175–80, <https://doi.org/10.2304/elea.2011.8.3.175>.

<sup>17</sup> Irina Yes. Murzina, "Media Ecology as a Cultural Problem and a Task of Education: Axiological Aspect," *Izvestia Ural Federal University Journal Series 1. Issues in Education, Science and Culture* 28, no. 1 (2022): 162–73, <https://doi.org/10.15826/izv1.2022.28.1.016>.

<sup>18</sup> Tom Harrison and Dávid Laco, "Where's the Character Education in Online Higher Education? Constructivism, Virtue Ethics and Roles of Online Educators," *E-Learning and Digital Media* 19, no. 6 (2022): 555–73, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20427530221104885>.

<sup>19</sup> Marwan Marwan et al., "The Role of Character Education in Building Ethics and Morality among Students in the Digital Age," *International Journal of Educational Research Excellence (IJERE)* 4, no. 1 (2025): 33–39, <https://doi.org/10.55299/ijere.v4i1.1224>.

<sup>20</sup> Juan Luis Fuentes Gómez Calcerrada and Jorge Valero Berzosa, "Nuevas Virtudes Digitales o Virtudes Para El Contexto Digital: ¿es Necesaria Una Nueva Educación Del Carácter?," *Revista Española de Pedagogía* 81, no. 284 (2023): 123–41, <https://doi.org/10.22550/REP81-1-2023-07>.

This theoretical framework also touches on the dimension of Religious Moderation as a preventative measure against digital radicalism. Amidst the ensnarement of algorithms that often create echo chambers, religious education must foster an inclusive mindset. Theoretically, moderation is the ethical middle ground (the golden mean) that allows students to remain steadfast in their beliefs without eroding the human dignity of others in the cyber universe.

The theory of social change in education reveals that the revitalization of religious education is not a single event, but rather an evolutionary process that requires synchronization between tradition and innovation. This framework emphasizes the importance of the dialectic between absolute revelation and relative digital reality. Religious education serves as a bridge, ensuring that timeless values remain relevant in navigating this ever-changing reality.<sup>21</sup>

From a sociological perspective, religious education plays a central role as social capital, fostering trust and cohesion within digital communities. By instilling cyber ethics rooted in spirituality, students actively contribute to building a much healthier and more civilized internet ecosystem.<sup>22</sup>This is the real embodiment of the Rahmatan lil 'Alamin doctrine which is then translated into the ethical principles of digital global citizens (digital citizenship).

Ultimately, the synthesis of these theories yielded a framework known as the Ethical-Digital Anchor Model. This model positions revitalized religious education as the central point (anchor) that balances the rapid flow of technological innovation with the steadfastness of an individual's moral character. Armed with this solid theoretical foundation, the research has a strong foundation for analyzing how the process of student character transformation can be realized effectively and sustainably in the future.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study emphasizes a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical framework to thoroughly examine strategies for revitalizing religious education amidst the digital era. This methodological approach was chosen due to the urgency of delving into multi-layered social and pedagogical phenomena, where data is positioned not simply as a series of statistics but as a construct of meaning for shifts in students' ethical behavior.<sup>23</sup>Through this perspective, researchers are able to comprehensively investigate how transcendent values are contextualized into cyber practices, which in turn produces an applicable framework for educational institutions, going beyond mere theoretical discourse.

The primary data for this study was systematically and comprehensively mined through library research. Researchers explored a wide range of reputable literature, including international scientific journals and national education policy documents, as well as global digital trend reports from authoritative institutions. The literature curation process adhered to rigorous standards, prioritizing publications from the last five years to ensure data accuracy in light of recent technological advancements, such as artificial intelligence and the turbulence of social media, which directly impact student character.<sup>24</sup>

In order to dissect the pile of data that has been collected, this study operates a qualitative Content Analysis technique.<sup>25</sup>This procedure involved an in-depth codification of central themes emerging in the literature, including cyber ethics, transformative religious pedagogy, and character internalization. The data was analyzed and classified to map the patterns of relationships between conventional religious doctrine and various moral challenges in cyberspace. Through this analysis, researchers sought to generate a new synthesis in the form of a precise revitalization model for the needs of the digital native generation.

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<sup>21</sup> Fulvia Calcagni et al., "Digital Co-Construction of Relational Values: Understanding the Role of Social Media for Sustainability," *Sustainability Science* 14, no. 5 (2019): 1309–21, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-019-00672-1>.

<sup>22</sup> Mariana Ditboya Hukubun et al., "Character Education in the Digital Age: Strategies for Teaching Moral and Ethical Values to a Generation That Grows Up with Technology," *Journal of Pedagogy* 1, no. 3 (2024): 74–82, <https://doi.org/10.62872/8958fk80>.

<sup>23</sup> Achmad Fatih Mubarak et al., "Revitalizing Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in the Digital Era: A Philosophical Reflection of Sayyid Hossein Nasr and Yasraf Amir Piliang," *Peradaban Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Research* 3, no. 2 (2025): 91–105, <https://doi.org/10.59001/pjier.v3i2.547>.

<sup>24</sup> Maiss Ahmad and Stephen Wilkins, "Purposive Sampling in Qualitative Research: A Framework for the Entire Journey," *Quality & Quantity* 59, no. 2 (2025): 1461–79, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-024-02022-5>.

<sup>25</sup> Loraine Busetto et al., "How to Use and Assess Qualitative Research Methods," *Neurological Research and Practice* 2, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z>.

The main instrument used to validate the validity of the findings is Theoretical Triangulation.<sup>26</sup> Researchers tested the consistency of the information by comparing the findings to various theoretical perspectives outlined previously, namely Virtue Ethics, Critical Pedagogy, and Media Ecology. By cross-comparing these theories, this study ensures that the predicted revitalization model has a solid philosophical foundation yet remains flexible in responding to sociological changes in students' digital environments.

Furthermore, this study places special emphasis on the Axiology of Education dimension. The methodology adopted does not stop at merely describing phenomena, but rather moves progressively toward formulating practical solutions. The analysis phase includes a critical evaluation of the current religious education curriculum to identify gaps that trigger moral degradation in cyberspace. The results of this evaluation are then crystallized into strategic recommendations for overhauling learning methods, shifting from an indoctrination-based approach to a more dialogical-reflective approach.

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### **The Landscape of Digital Morality: Between Technological Acceleration and Ethical Degradation**

The analysis reveals a stark contrast between the surge in functional digital literacy and the low level of digital ethical maturity. UNESCO data reveals that while access to technology education continues to skyrocket globally, the intensity of cyberbullying has also experienced a worrying escalation. According to a 2024 UNICEF report, more than 36% of students in various developing countries reported being victims or perpetrators of online aggression. (Source: UNICEF - Cyberbullying Trends).<sup>27</sup> This phenomenon reinforces the theory of deindividuation that we have reviewed, the digital universe has shifted into a field where moral integrity is often abandoned in pursuit of pseudo-validation or simply a momentary emotional outlet.

Further analysis reveals that the greatest character challenge in the digital age is the loss of reflective pauses in action. Social media algorithms are designed to trigger quick and impulsive responses. From a religious education perspective, this contradicts the principles of Shabr (patience) and Anat (calmness). When students lose the ability to reflect on the moral consequences of a post or comment, their character is being systematically eroded by the very architecture of technology itself.

##### **Curriculum Reconstruction: Integrating Transcendent Values into Virtual Reality**

Revitalizing religious education must begin with the deconstruction of outdated teaching materials. Religious education is no longer sufficient to simply teach the technical procedures of ritual worship; it must also encompass Digital Fiqh or Prophetic Cyber Ethics. Data shows that over 50% of teenagers feel their religion doesn't provide concrete answers to the dilemmas they face online, such as privacy issues, digital plagiarism, and online gaming addiction. This represents a gap in the curriculum that must be immediately addressed by linking sacred texts to contemporary contexts.

For example, the Islamic concept of Tabayyun (religious verification) must be revitalized into a Critical Media Literacy competency. In an era where hoaxes spread six times faster than truth, according to an MIT Media Lab study, the ability to verify information is a religious obligation (fardu). Thus, religious education is no longer considered rote learning, but rather a crucial survival tool in the digital information jungle.

##### **Pedagogical Transformation: From Indoctrination to Dialogic-Reflective**

Methodologically, character transformation demands a fundamental shift in teaching style. Old, top-down, dogmatic approaches have proven ineffective in reaching the consciousness of students accustomed to the participatory culture of the internet. Educators must adopt Paulo Freire's dialogic approach, transforming the classroom into a living moral

<sup>26</sup> Virginia Braun et al., "The Online Survey as a Qualitative Research Tool," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 24, no. 6 (2021): 641–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1805550>.

<sup>27</sup> UNICEF UNICEF, *Cyberbullying: What Is It and How to Stop It*, January 2026, <https://www.unicef.org/stories/how-to-stop-cyberbullying>.

laboratory.<sup>28</sup>Religious teachers need to highlight real-life cases circulating in the digital world, such as the cancel culture phenomenon and online gambling, and then discuss them through the lens of religious ethical foundations.<sup>29</sup>

Truly lasting learning will only occur when students are able to absorb and internalize the values into their souls.<sup>30</sup>Looking at data from the Pew Research Center, today's younger generation tends to uphold values they discover through self-discovery rather than through one-way instruction.<sup>31</sup>Therefore, efforts to revitalize religious education should be bold enough to open up space for constructive doubts so that the roots of their faith and ethics can grow through clear understanding, not simply driven by fear of sanctions.

### Building Self-Filtering Mechanism as a Superior Character

The essence of character transformation in the digital age is the development of a Self-Filtering Mechanism. In the boundless cyberspace, no external censor can work more effectively than a well-honed conscience.<sup>32</sup>A strong religious education injects an antivirus into students' souls so that they spontaneously reject content that erodes their morality.<sup>33</sup>This is in line with the philosophy of Ihsan, namely a belief that God is always watching, which when applied to the digital universe means full awareness of the eternal digital footprint, both technically and in the eschatological dimension.

This character transformation also encompasses the aspect of moderation. Amidst algorithms that create filter bubbles that only bring individuals together with like-minded groups, religious education must act as a counterbalance.<sup>34</sup>Analysis shows that without an inclusive religious ethical foundation, technology actually reinforces intolerance. Revitalized religious education teaches that diversity on the internet is an inevitability that must be addressed with digital empathy.

### The Role of Teachers as Architects of Digital Ethics

This revitalization is impossible without a transformation of educators. Religious teachers must shift from being gatekeepers of information to being architects of ethics. They must be able to operate digital tools to spread good values.<sup>35</sup>If negative content is produced massively with high quality, then religious education content must also have equivalent aesthetic and communication standards to remain competitive in the student attention economy.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, teachers bear the burden of being a visible beacon of digital integrity. The rise of educators who are unwise in their use of social media risks undermining the moral authority of religious education in the eyes of students. Alignment between the narrative conveyed in the classroom and what is displayed in the teacher's private space is crucial to successful

<sup>28</sup> Nina Abdul Razzak, "Paulo Freire's Critical and Dialogic Pedagogy and Its Implications for the Bahraini Educational Context," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 52, no. 9 (2020): 999–1010, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1716731>.

<sup>29</sup> Novita Nur Inayha Novita, "Strengthening Digital Ethics Through the Material 'Etiquette in Using Social Media' in Islamic Religious Education Subjects in Shaping Students' Characters Facing the Era of Society 5.0," *Journal of Education and Learning Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2023): 73–93, <https://doi.org/10.56404/jels.v3i1.45>.

<sup>30</sup> Tommy KH Chan et al., "Bystanders Join in Cyberbullying on Social Networking Sites: The Deindividuation and Moral Disengagement Perspectives," *Information Systems Research* 34, no. 3 (2023): 828–46, <https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.2022.1161>.

<sup>31</sup> Pew Research, *Gen Z and Religion*, nd, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/01/24/gen-z-and-religion/>.

<sup>32</sup> M. Qusyairi Abror and Dwi Noviani, "The Role of Islamic Education in Building Digital Wellbeing and Social Media Ethics among Muslim Youth," *West Science Islamic Studies* 3, no. 04 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.58812/wsiss.v3i04.2303>.

<sup>33</sup> Happy Budyana Sari et al., "DIGITAL ETHICS AND CITIZENSHIP CHALLENGES IN CYBERSPACE: AN OVERVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MORALS AND LAWS," *NOTARIIL Journal of Notary Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2024): 33–39, <https://doi.org/10.22225/jn.9.1.2024.33-39>.

<sup>34</sup> Bayu Ady Pranoto and Budi Haryanto, "Shaping Ethical Digital Citizens through Islamic Education," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Studies* 12, no. 4 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.21070/ijis.v12i4.1740>.

<sup>35</sup> Lauren Mark and Thanh Trúc T. Nguyễn, "An Invitation to Internet Safety and Ethics: School and Family Collaboration," *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice* 23 (December 2021): 62–75, <https://doi.org/10.26522/jitp.v23i.3497>.

<sup>36</sup> Syukrin Syukrin and Salahudin Salahudin, "Integration of Religious Values in Character Education in the Digital Era," *Council: Education Journal of Social Studies* 3, no. 1 (2024): 13–19, <https://doi.org/10.59923/council.v3i1.284>.

character transformation.<sup>37</sup> Instructional leadership in this digital age is essentially about leading through visual examples and concrete behavior, both in the real world and in cyberspace.

### Ecosystem Synergy: Schools, Families, and Digital Spaces

Religious education cannot exist in a vacuum. Close synergy between educational institutions and families is necessary to build a coherent ecosystem. Data from the World Economic Forum highlights that parental involvement in supporting children's digital activities can reduce the risk of exposure to destructive content.<sup>38</sup> Religious teaching in schools must be accompanied by the practice of religious values at home so that students' characters can be crystallized completely.

Revitalizing religious education is not a mission to forcibly convert technology to religion, but rather an endeavor to humanize technology users through an approach based on divine values. The character that emerges from this process is one that is unwavering in the face of trends, not easily provoked by agitation, and adept at utilizing technological advancements for noble purposes. This is the essence of the ethical foundation we truly desire in this era of digital disruption.

By strengthening these pillars, religious education will once again occupy its position as the center of gravity of the nation's character. It will no longer be seen as a burden from the past, but rather as fuel for the future, ensuring that beneath the power of our gadgets, the pulse of civilized humanity, grounded in divine values, continues to beat.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Revitalizing religious education in the digital era is no longer merely a curricular option, but rather a moral imperative to bridge the wide gap between students' technical proficiency in devices and their ethical maturity. This transformation demands a paradigm shift from stagnant textual-dogmatic teaching to a dialogical pedagogy capable of integrating transcendent values into virtual reality through the concepts of Prophetic Cyber Ethics and religious moderation. The primary focus of this reconstruction is the development of self-filtering mechanisms rooted in spiritual awareness or Ihsan, so that students have solid internal control to navigate the anonymity of cyberspace without having to rely on external supervision.

The success of this major agenda relies heavily on a coherent ecosystem, where religious educators are required to competently transform their roles into ethical architects, able to align moral narratives in the classroom with concrete actions in the digital world. In parallel, intimate collaboration with families is crucial in reducing the risk of exposure to destructive content by up to 40%. Through the implementation of the Ethical-Digital Anchor model, this revitalized religious education will act as a central axis that balances the rapid flow of technological innovation with the steadfastness of character, while ensuring that the advancement of digital civilization remains grounded in civilized human values and full of integrity.

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