The Role of Digital Ethics in Strengthening Character Education in the Digital Age

Peran Etika Digital dalam Upaya Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter di Era Digital

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Abstract

The increasingly massive use of digital technology has influenced the process of life, one of which is in the field of education. Digital technology has been widely used in the learning process from the elementary to university levels. The use of technology also needs to be accompanied by strengthening character education, which can be done through understanding digital ethics. Digital ethics provides an understanding of moral standards and rules that can be carried out to utilize digital technology. Strengthening character education through digital ethics in the current era is necessary because the teaching and learning process uses more digital technology. The research method used is a literature study approach with descriptive analysis. This study aims to provide an understanding of the contribution of digital ethics applied in daily life to character education in the digital era. The results show that digital ethics has a role in efforts to strengthen character education in the digital era. This is shown through applying moral standards and rules that must be carried out in digital activities. So that applicable rules can direct all digital activities. Digital ethics is one aspect of strengthening character education in the increasingly advanced digital technology development era. If digital ethics is applied correctly, it will positively impact life in the future.

Keywords: Digital Ethics; Character Education; Digital Age

Abstract

Penggunaan teknologi digital yang semakin masif memberikan pengaruh terhadap proses kehidupan salah satunya di bidang pendidikan. Teknologi digital telah banyak digunakan dalam proses pembelajaran dari tingkat dasar hingga perguruan tinggi. Penggunaan teknologi tersebut juga perlu diiringi dengan penguatan pendidikan karakter yang dapat dilakukan melalui pemahaman etika digital. Etika digital memberikan pemahaman terkait dengan standar moral dan aturan yang dapat dilakukan dalam upaya pemanfaatan teknologi digital. Penguatan pendidikan karakter melalui peran etika digital di era saat ini sangat diperlukan, karena proses belajar mengajar cenderung lebih banyak menggunakan media teknologi digital. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan studi literatur dengan analisis deskriptif. Tujuan dari penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman terkait kontribusi etika digital yang diterapkan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari terhadap pendidikan karakter di era digital. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa etika digital memiliki peran terhadap upaya penguatan pendidikan karakter di era digital. Hal tersebut ditunjukkan melalui penerapan standar moral dan aturan yang harus dilakukan dalam aktivitas digital. Sehingga segala aktivitas digital dapat diarahkan sesuai dengan aturan yang berlaku. Etika digital menjadi salah satu aspek penguatan pendidikan karakter di era perkembangan teknologi digital yang semakin maju. Apabila etika digital diterapkan dengan benar, maka akan membawa dampak positif bagi kehidupan di masa mendatang.

Kata Kunci: etika digital, pendidikan karakter, era digital

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the development of digital transformation has driven a huge growth in the variety of lives in the world. So, it is unsurprising that some organizations and companies are competing to implement effective strategies by reducing employees by replacing them with machines. If this step is not equipped with an understanding of awareness, it will affect human autonomy and honor and even the role of humans is replaced by machines. (Deloitte, 2022). On the other hand, technological change brings about life changes. Among the positive impacts caused by the development of technology and information is easier access to information without space and time constraints. However, the presence of technological development is also slowly changing the order of human life, and some jobs are being replaced by technology. Based on data obtained by the *World Economic Forum* (WFE), 69 million new jobs will be created, and around 83 million old jobs will be lost. (Hendrarto, 2023). Jobs that will be much needed in the future are digital-based jobs, so they can be done from various places without space and time restrictions. Responding to the challenges that will occur in the future, it is necessary to strengthen and prepare the abilities of future generations. One of them is through strengthening digital character. This is an important reason because in doing work in the future, there will be more interaction in the digital space than in the real world.

The younger generation also has an important role in civilizational change because they support the continuity of the life of the nation and state. Especially in the current era of digital development, the younger generation is required to master digital technology. Therefore, support is needed to strengthen noble attitudes and morals. For this reason, character education is important in realizing the ideals of the Indonesian nation. Education is carried out not only to build intelligence but also to build character, attitudes and behavior. (Sugiyanto *et al.*, 2023).. In the current condition, building character is the basic foundation that can strengthen character in the current and future digital era.

Indonesians in the current digital era have actively participated in various digital lives, which are characterized by many life activities that are fully automated and digital. This condition can be found in the many digital-based companies around our lives. Digital companies today offer a variety of advanced features that were not found in the past, so the most important thing now is how data privacy becomes important because every day, billions of people share data through writing, videos, and photos. The impact of digitalization today is a challenge and an opportunity for the younger generation to take advantage of it. So, it is necessary to understand and strengthen digital ethics, which is expected to shape the nation's character.

Digital ethics in everyday life can be a behavioral guideline and guide privacy boundaries in accessing digital information and using digital technology. In addition, digital ethics provides an understanding of legal evaluation and responsibility when using digital technology. (Hanna & Kazim, 2021). Digital ethics provides direction regarding good bad moral values related to the use of digital technology. It helps in making decisions regarding digital technology because, in the current era, humans cannot be separated from digital technology (Aripradono et al., 2021). (Aripradono *et al.*, 2021).. In responding to the current conditions, digital ethics can be a foundation in efforts to strengthen character in the digital era. This makes digital ethics the main basis for the character of the current generation, which tends to use digital technology more.

2. *Literature Review*

2.1 Digital Ethics

Digital ethics is a competency that individuals need to be aware of, consider, and develop in using the Internet in everyday life in order to utilize it wisely. In addition, when using the Internet, students are also required to reflect on their behavior and manners when using digital technology and be able to practice digital ethics. (Syah *et al.*, 2023). Digital ethics has interpersonal, social, organizational and national norms that regulate how digital users can behave in accordance with the rules that apply in the digital world. Digital ethics is a digital transformation paradigm that is immune to moral bias from humans, so humans are expected not to allow digital machines to discriminate against ethical values that apply to society. Not only that, digital ethics also works in two directions, namely, from humans to machines and from machines to humans. (Deloitte, 2022). Digital ethics is also understood as the ability of individuals to model and consider digital ethical governance in everyday life. (Guntar, Ardhiani & Fitriani, 2023).. In today's all-digital conditions, not a few deviations from digital ethics lead to crimes such as *bullying*, fraud, spreading hoax content, and others. Digital ethics has several problems related to trust, honesty, and moral values. (Sari, Rejekiningsih & Muchtarom, 2020).. In the current situation, the younger generation, especially social media users, is faced with several attitude choices due to changes in the times, such as consumerism, individualism, radicalism and others. These attitudes can be found in internet users who currently deviate from social values and norms.

Young people dominate users of digital technology in Indonesia. Based on research conducted by Microsoft related to the level of politeness of Indonesians, netizens ranked the least polite in Southeast Asia, with 76, which indicates a low level of politeness. (Nugraha, 2023). Thus, these situations and conditions require strengthening digital ethics because they relate to manners and regulations regarding the use of digital technology, especially social media. Digital ethics covers how netizens interact directly and relates to how to disseminate and respond to content found on social media platforms. To maintain digital integrity and ethics, users of social media platforms need to recognize the impact of violating digital ethics. This requires a culture of building a digital ethics ecosystem that can be understood and applied in everyday life.

2.2 Character Education

Character education plays an important role in realizing the nation's next generation. There needs to be collaboration from various parties, including parents, teachers and the surrounding environment, to shape character. Character education is more focused on a person's actions or behavior, such as if someone behaves badly, dishonestly or cruelly, then that person is manifested as bad behavior. Character education has the task of teaching about good values and instilling habits of good things. (Rachmawati, 2018). Therefore, through the emphasis on character education, it is hoped that a person will be able to feel the values of goodness and get used to it in their daily activities.

Based on Thomas Licona's thinking, character education is also an active effort to improve one's ability to understand and defend basic ethical concepts. This is the starting point of expected character development. Therefore, students must be able to understand these values (Tantri, Aqilla & Sukmawati, 2023).. Character education can also be understood as an effort to influence students' character. Character education not only teaches

about right and wrong but also emphasizes habits that are reflected in activities. Through this effort, I hope to become someone with true principles that I can explain. (Ismuwardani & Hastuti, 2021). Character education is essential in an effort to face the challenges posed by technological developments. So that the family, school, and community environment can participate in preparing students with character with the support of a safe environment in the use of digital technology. Character education in the current era is expected to equip students with insights such as *digital skills*, *digital safety* and *digital* ethics. (Novita, 2023). Furthermore, the purpose of character education is to encourage the strengthening and development of values reflected in student behavior in the home, school and community environments. Character education also contributes to maintaining the quality of the country's human resources. Character education is realized through the conscious cooperation of various parties, including families, schools and local communities.

2.3   The Digital Age

The digital era has both positive and negative impacts on the process of life sustainability. Positive influences can benefit the community, such as the ease of obtaining information, entertainment and knowledge. (Tantri, Aqilla & Sukmawati, 2023).. In the digital era, technology is important in society's efforts to face competition. (Ismuwardani & Hastuti, 2021).. In the current situation, technology also plays an important role in the learning process in schools from elementary to tertiary levels. So, in responding to these developments, students, educators, and society are expected to understand and utilize digital technology. In the current digital era, children have also been spoiled by sophisticated technology, such as the ease of finding learning resources through Google, chatGPT, and other service features, so children tend to be lazy to think and criticize the situation. In contrast to before the advent of the digital era, children in the learning process tended to utilize learning resources such as books or ask the teacher directly.

The following can be exemplified by some of the characteristics of the digital generation: (1) digital generations tend to prefer to use social media to show their existence to the outside world (2) have a tendency to be open, prefer to share on social media compared to family and friends, and also tend to think instantly and aggressively (3) digital generations prefer to get freedom because they can express themselves and tend to want to control themselves (4) on the other hand, digital generations tend to have the ability to learn faster than generations who do not use social media. This is supported by the ease of accessing information and knowledge in digital media. (Gracia *et al.*, 2018). The emergence of the digital era has brought changes to the order of life, so the digital era needs to be addressed and used as an opportunity for better life changes in the future. Relevant to the conditions of the digital era, it is necessary to strengthen character through digital ethics that are integrated through understanding the curriculum from primary to tertiary levels as well as direct practice in everyday life.

3.   Research Methods

This research is a qualitative study with a library research design in which the data collection model is done through digital searches. Various digital library sources, including Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC and online news sources, were used to enable the capture of scientific insights into the role of digital ethics in efforts to strengthen character education in the digital era. Regarding the time parameter of publication, the data was collected from the 2019-2023 timeframe. More specifically, the author collected data

from various sources, as many as 20 scientific articles from scientific journals, policy briefs, and other relevant news articles related to the discovery of the role of digital ethics in strengthening character education in the digital era.

The literature data that has been collected is analyzed descriptively interpretative. The analysis steps taken are, first, reduction by selecting, sorting and grouping data compiled into several main issues related to digital ethics, character education and the digital era. Second, data presentation is done in the form of narration and interpretation. Third, verification is done by drawing conclusions in accordance with the fundamental questions of the researcher.
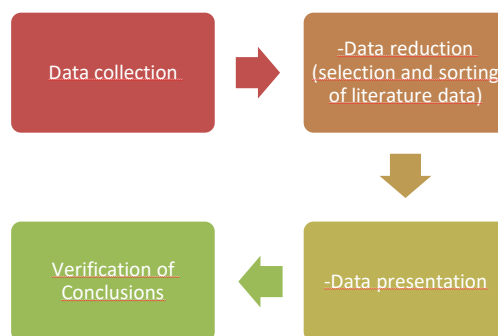

Figure 1: Research flow

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Results

Digital ethics plays a role in efforts to strengthen character education in the digital era, which is developing today. The current generation tends to prefer using digital media in their daily activities. Not only that, but currently, the learning process also uses digital media because it is considered more interesting, easy to understand, and can be accessed without space and time constraints. Excessive use of technological media such as social media will have a negative impact on student development, resulting in dependence on digital media, lack of independence, lack of critical thinking, and some deviations in the academic world. As a result of these trends, it is necessary to understand the aspects of digital ethics that can be applied in everyday life.

The results showed that in the digital transformation efforts developed in Indonesia today, it is necessary to support a strong character foundation that reflects the noble values of Indonesian culture. Recently, demoralization of the teenage generation has often occurred due to the negative influence of social media. Crimes such as spreading *hoaxes*, pornography, *bullying*, fraud and others are rampant on social media. Easy access to social media, so that various groups, including minors can easily reach it. As such, character education plays a role in overcoming the negative impact of uncontrolled technological development. Strengthening digital ethics can be the basis for thinking and behaving on social media. Digital ethics is relevant to the current situation and conditions, so all Indonesian citizens can implement it by prioritizing human values and the noble values of the Indonesian nation.

4.2. Discussion

In today's digital era, technology has an important role in various fields of life, including education. Digital technology is currently utilized as a means of interaction between students and educators in schools. (Putri, 2018). However, the presence of digital technology does not

solely positively impact child development. This is indicated by the many cases that occur due to the use of digital media that are not well controlled. In the teaching and learning process, there are many deviations, such as students can easily commit plagiarism, dependence on digital media, and other academic deviations. This phenomenon needs attention, especially in the field of strengthening character education. Education is basically a strategy to help solve the problems of a nation that emphasizes improving the character of human resources so that it can achieve the goals and expectations that it aspired to.

In an effort to strengthen character education in the digital era, it is necessary to collaborate with parents, teachers, and the community by providing examples that can be imitated and applied by the next generation in everyday life. The use of digital technology in underage children needs strict supervision so that there is an emphasis on character that will affect one's attitudes and actions. If the strengthening of character education in this digital era can be successful, it will create a strong and intelligent generation in the future. (Jannah, Sari, 2019). Thus, the most important thing that can be done in efforts to strengthen character in the digital era is the role and responsibility of parents, teachers and the community environment. Not only that but strengthening character education through digital ethics can also be integrated through various policies, such as educational curriculum policies and digital media usage policies. This can facilitate the application of digital ethics, thus minimizing any deviation from digital ethics.

The increasingly massive use of technology requires standard rules that can limit and regulate the use of digital technology. This is done as an effort to anticipate the misuse of digital technology. The use of digital technology that is not well controlled indicates the low cultivation of character in a person. Good character cultivation is one indicator of successful learning outcomes. In addition, education is a valuable asset for a nation because the success of a country can be seen from the success of its education. (Gusti *et al.*, 2023). Through strengthening the field of education, it is expected that the character of the generation will be formed in accordance with the noble values of the Indonesian nation. Character education in the digital era needs to be adjusted to the times, such as the application of digital ethics, which was previously unimaginable, but in the current situation, digital ethics plays a role in strengthening character education.

A weak culture of digital ethics can lead to violations of citizens' digital rights. The lack of digital ethics has the opportunity to create an unhealthy digital space that contains negative elements. Therefore, digital ethics needs to be the foundation in efforts to strengthen character education. Values such as responsibility, honesty, benevolence, and justice should be the foundation of every behavior in daily life in relation to using digital technology. Based on these values, students are expected to apply them in their activities. Digital ethics is seen as an important thing for equipping students. Students must have moral intelligence so that they can minimize deviations in the learning process. The educational process can support the process of making academic works, journals, and other scientific works quickly, so there are irregularities in the educational process, such as the tendency of students to use ChatGPT artificial intelligence technology to complete their assignments. There are several cases. The use of ChatGPT in education is controversial, and some people are against it because of the need for accuracy in plagiarism checking. Therefore, when using artificial intelligence, care must be taken so that the work created does not provide false information (Sinaga, 2023). Teachers and students at both primary and higher education levels need to address and implement this trend wisely. This

initiative supports the learning process that emphasizes academic integrity. So, this case is also relevant to the application of digital ethics in the learning process.

In line with the above, digital ethics is the cornerstone of efforts to build a proactive and aggressive character education program tailored to the digital youth. Digital ethics must be understood by all parties, such as teachers who are tasked with disseminating knowledge and fostering an online and safe environment for students. Not only that, digital ethics also includes and ensures inclusivity and diversity in online learning. An educator must also curate diverse learning content and foster a sense of solidarity among students. Emphasizing inclusivity in the school environment contributes to strengthening the understanding of equitable character education through the application of digital ethics. Digital ethics not only focuses on the use of social media but also provides direction on the attitudes that must be shown on social media. This will reflect one's character. If digital ethics is applied from an early age, it will have an impact on the paradigm of one's way of thinking, which will be more critical and wise.

As the digital world continues to evolve, it is necessary to uphold ethical standards for a better future of character education. By implementing digital ethics, educators can ensure inclusive, respectful and equal learning. This is demonstrated through online learning. Digital ethics has contributed to strengthening character in the digital era as a practical strategy to navigate the moral landscape of online learning. Character education in the digital era can be adopted by teachers through a planned and structured approach. (Harrison & Laco, 2022). This is one of the important reasons that the current learning process tends to adopt online learning. In the future, the learning process will certainly use more digital media, so the role of digital ethics will continue to be needed.

Digital ethics provides guidance on the use of digital media so that digital media users can reflect on the behavioral system when using it. (Ott & Tiozzo, 2022).. If someone using digital media is accustomed to understanding and reflecting on what he has used, it will form a positive habit. This will be embedded and characterize one's character in using technology wisely and carefully. If the use of digital technology is not limited and there are no clear rules, it will cause chaos in life. In addition, it is also easy for character deviations to occur. In order to achieve character education as expected and reflect attitudes (independent, disciplined and responsible, more effort is needed so that the character crisis that has occurred recently can be resolved and corrected. The efforts made to improve character as expected are done by emphasizing and supervising the appropriate implementation of digital ethics. If this can be integrated well, it will reflect the quality of human resources that are ready to compete in the future.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the above research, it can be concluded that the role of digital ethics in strengthening character education in the digital era is that digital ethics provides a foundation and direction in efforts to use digital technology. This is done in response to the rampant deviation of character in the use of digital technology, such as the many cases of bullying, spreading hoaxes, plagiarism, and other crimes. Digital ethics can be applied to digital activities in a fair and comprehensive manner. Thus, in its implementation, digital ethics can also be integrated through understanding in schools from elementary to university levels. In addition, in an effort to strengthen character in the digital era, parents, teachers and the community have roles and responsibilities through exemplary examples.

This research is limited by the reliance on descriptive analysis of limited journals, articles and online websites. Therefore, further research is needed related to the role of digital ethics in strengthening character education in the digital era and can be complemented with more in-depth and extensive data sources. Analysis related to the role of digital ethics in strengthening character education in the digital era can be the basis for formulating policies in the field of education and policies on the use of social media in Indonesia. In addition, other researchers can use analysis from various points of view to complement data related to the role of digital ethics in strengthening character education in the digital era.

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