

Transformation of Character Education through PKn Learning in Elementary School Students in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the transformation of character education through civic education learning in elementary school students in the digital era. The research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data was obtained through observations, interviews, and documentation carried out in the PKn learning process at SDN Karangmloko 1. The results of the study show that PKn learning has undergone a transformation from conventional learning to more contextual, interactive, and digital-based learning. The use of digital media such as learning videos, interactive media, and digital quizzes can increase students' active involvement in learning while helping students understand civic values and character. Second, the implementation of character education is carried out through the integration of the values of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, tolerance, honesty, and love for the homeland in learning activities and daily habits at school. Teachers play an important role as facilitators and role models in guiding students to use technology positively and responsibly. Third, the implementation of character education in the digital era also faces challenges, such as the limitation of teachers' ability to utilize technology, lack of supporting facilities, and the negative influence of the use of social media and gadgets on students. Therefore, cooperation between teachers, schools, and parents is needed in supporting the formation of students' character in the digital era. Thus, digital-based PKn learning has an important role in transforming the character education of elementary school students

to become a generation that is intelligent, characterful, and wise in utilizing technology.

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Introduction

The development of digital technology in the 21st century has brought major changes in people's lives, including in the world of education. The use of the internet, social media, and digital devices is increasingly accessible to elementary school-age children (Fadillah, 2022). This phenomenon has a positive impact in the form of ease of obtaining information and learning resources, but on the other hand it also causes various character problems in students (Cipta et al., 2023). Currently, there are still students who are less disciplined, have a low sense of responsibility, declining manners, and the tendency to misuse digital technology such as gadget addiction, the spread of negative speech, and a lack of social awareness. This condition shows that technological progress has not been fully balanced with strengthening students' character so that character education becomes an urgent need in the digital era (Azizah, 2023). Therefore, an integrated effort is needed between schools, teachers, parents, and the community in instilling character values so that students are able to use digital technology wisely, responsibly, and in accordance with applicable social and moral norms.

Theoretically, character education is the process of instilling moral values and forming students' personalities so that they have attitudes and behaviors in accordance with social, cultural, and national values (Iqbal & Sambas, 2024). Thomas Lickona explained that character education includes three main components, namely *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action* which must be developed in an integrated manner in the educational process. Meanwhile, Ki Hajar Dewantara emphasized that education not only aims to educate intellectuals, but also to shape students' ethics and personality (Hilman Fauzi, 2022). In the context of elementary school education, character formation is very important because the age of children is the early period of personality development that becomes the basis for future behavior (Prabandari, 2020). Thus, character education in elementary school needs to be carried out consistently and integrated in the entire learning process so that students not only develop intellectually, but also have good personality, morals, and behavior as a provision for life in the future.

The importance of character education is also strengthened through various government regulations. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that education functions to develop abilities and form a dignified character and civilization of the nation. In addition, Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning the Strengthening of Character Education emphasizes that character education must be integrated into learning activities, school culture, and community life. In the Independent Curriculum, character strengthening is manifested through the Pancasila Student Profile which emphasizes the values of faith, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity. The regulation shows that character education is an important part of the national education system.

Globally, the development of the use of digital technology in children continues to increase. A study funded by UNICEF and carried out by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kemkominfo) found that 98 percent of children and adolescents know about the internet and 79.5 percent of them are internet users. shows that most school-age children have been connected to the internet and digital media from an early age. In Indonesia, according to the 2024 survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), around 212 million Indonesians (80% of the total population) are active internet users. This shows an increase in the number of internet users among children and adolescents every year. The high intensity of the use of digital media without proper supervision has the potential to affect the moral and behavioral development of students. Therefore, schools are required to be able to guide students to be not only digitally capable, but also have good character in using technology.

In practice, PKn learning has a strategic role in shaping students' character (Fauziah, 2023). PKn teaches the values of Pancasila, democracy, responsibility, tolerance, discipline, and love for the homeland. Through PKn learning, students are expected to be able to understand their rights and obligations as citizens while applying moral values in daily life. However, conditions in the field show that the implementation of character education through PKn learning is still not optimal. Some elementary schools still use conventional teacher-centered learning methods so that students are less active and character learning is only theoretical (Irianto, 2022). Teachers emphasize more on achieving cognitive aspects rather than habituating attitudes and behaviors (Abdul, 2022) . Therefore, a more innovative, participatory, and character-oriented learning transformation is needed so that character education is not only understood in theory, but also able to be applied by students in their daily lives.

Field conditions show that the use of digital technology in PKn learning has also not been maximized. Some teachers have not been able to integrate digital media effectively in the character learning process. As a result, the use of technology by students is more directed towards entertainment than educational activities that support the formation of positive character. In addition, supervision of the use of digital media in elementary school children is also still limited, so that it affects the behavior and social interaction of students in the school and family environment.

Based on previous research, most character education studies are more about the implementation of character values in general or the use of digital media in learning. Research that specifically discusses the transformation of character education through civic education learning in elementary school students in the digital era is still limited. In

addition, previous research tends to focus on conventional learning strategies and has not studied the integration of digital technology as a means of transforming character education.

Various studies on character education through PKn learning in elementary school students have been conducted. Research conducted by (Pertiwi, 2021) with the title "Implementation of Character Education Values in PKn Subjects in Elementary Schools" explains that PKn learning has an important role in instilling character values such as discipline, responsibility, and nationalism in elementary school students. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach and shows that teachers can integrate character education through learning activities, habituation, and example. This research is relevant to the research that will be carried out because it both discuss character education in PKn learning in elementary schools. The difference lies in the focus of research, where the research that will be carried out focuses more on the transformation of character education in the digital era.

Research by (Suryana, 2022) entitled "Implementation of the Concept of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Character Education in Elementary Schools in the Digital Era" discusses the implementation of character education in the digital era using the concept of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's education. The results of the study show that character education in elementary schools can be carried out through example, habituation, and wise use of technology. This research is relevant because it examines character education in elementary school students in the digital era. However, the research focuses more on the concept of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, while the research that will be conducted focuses on the transformation of character education through PKn learning.

Meanwhile, research conducted by (Syamsiah, 2025) with the title "The Role of PPKn Learning in Shaping the Character of Elementary School Students in the Digital Era" discusses the importance of PPKn learning in shaping students' character in the midst of digital technology developments. The results of the study show that PPKn learning is able to instill the values of discipline, responsibility, and digital ethics through contextual learning and based on Pancasila values. This research is relevant because it discusses character education through PKn learning in elementary schools in the digital era. The difference is that the research focuses more on the role of PKn learning in character formation, while the research that will be conducted focuses on the transformation of character education in the learning process.

This research is important because character education in elementary school students must be able to adapt to technological developments and the challenges of the digital era. The transformation of character education through PKn learning is needed so that Pancasila values can be instilled in a more contextual, interesting, and in accordance with the characteristics of the digital generation (Armianti et al., 2024). Technology-based learning approaches, interactive media, and contextual learning are expected to increase student engagement while strengthening positive character formation (Warsito & Indrayanto, 2023). Therefore, the transformation of character education through civic education learning is an important step in forming a generation that is not only capable of utilizing technology, but also has a character based on the values of Pancasila in the digital era.

This research focuses on the study of character education transformation through civic education learning by utilizing the digital learning approach in elementary school students. This research not only discusses theoretical character cultivation, but also examines how PKn learning can be transformed through the use of digital technology to shape students' character in the modern era. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the transformation of character education through PKn learning in elementary school students in the digital era, as well as to find out effective learning strategies in shaping students' character in accordance with Pancasila values.

Method

The development of digital technology in the 21st century has brought major changes in people's lives, including in the world of education. The use of the internet, social media, and digital devices is increasingly accessible to elementary school-age children (Fadillah, 2022). This phenomenon has a positive impact in the form of ease of obtaining information and learning resources, but on the other hand it also causes various character problems in students (Cipta et al., 2023). Currently, there are still students who are less disciplined, have a low sense of responsibility, declining manners, and the tendency to misuse digital technology such as gadget addiction, the spread of negative speech, and a lack of social awareness. This condition shows that technological progress has not been fully balanced with strengthening students' character so that character education becomes an urgent need in the digital era (Azizah, 2023). Therefore, an integrated effort is needed between schools, teachers, parents, and the community in instilling character values so that students are able to use digital technology wisely, responsibly, and in accordance with applicable social and moral norms.

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Results and Discussion

Results of the Discussion

1. Transformation of PKn Learning in the Digital Era

Based on the results of observations and interviews, PKn learning in elementary schools has undergone a significant transformation in the digital era. These changes can be seen from the learning method that was previously dominated by the lecture method to more interactive and student-centered learning. Teachers no longer only explain the material in one direction, but begin to involve students in discussions, questions and answers, problem-solving, and group work. In addition, the use of learning media has also changed by utilizing digital technology such as interactive videos, PowerPoint presentations, educational YouTube, and digital-based quizzes. The use of these media makes students more interested and active during the learning process.



Figure 1. N-P learning using digital media
(Source: Researcher's Field Documentation, May 11, 2026)

Based on the image, it can be seen that teachers use digital media as a means to deliver PKn material in a more interesting and interactive way. The use of digital media makes students more focused and active during learning.

This is strengthened by the results of interviews with class teachers who stated that:

Q: "How do students respond to the use of digital media such as videos and interactive images in PKn learning?"

"Now children prefer to learn PKn using videos and interactive pictures, because they are easier to understand than just listening to the teacher's explanation."
(GK-1 interview, May 11, 2026)."

In the transformation of PKn learning in the digital era, the role of teachers has undergone significant changes. Teachers are no longer the only source of learning in the learning process, but rather act as facilitators and supervisors who help students understand the material and direct the use of technology positively and wisely. Through this role, teachers provide assistance to students in utilizing digital media as a means of learning, while creating more interactive, active, and student-centered learning.

Q: "What is the role of teachers in learning in the current digital era?"

"Teachers must now be able to guide students to use technology well and direct them so that technology is used for learning." (GK-2 interview, May 12, 2026).

"Now teachers need to be able to teach and direct students so that the technology used is for learning, not just for play." (GK-2 interview, May 12, 2026).

Based on these results, it can be seen that the transformation of PKn learning in the digital era can be seen from changes in learning methods, the use of digital media, and changes in the role of teachers in the learning process.

2. Implementation of Character Education through PKn Learning

The results of the study show that character education is integrated into civic learning through various learning activities and habituation in the classroom. The character values instilled include discipline, responsibility, tolerance, cooperation, and honesty. Teachers instill a disciplined attitude through the habit of doing digital assignments on time, while the value of responsibility is seen when students complete group assignments and presentation of discussion results.

Based on the picture, it can be seen that students are actively involved in group discussion activities during PKn learning. Through these activities, students learn to work together and respect the opinions of their peers.

The classroom teacher explained that the values of discipline and responsibility are applied through digital-based tasks that must be collected on time.

Q: "How do teachers instill the value of discipline and responsibility to students in learning PKn?"

"Children are accustomed to collecting assignments through class groups on time so that they learn discipline and responsibility." (GK-1 interview, May 11, 2026).

In addition, the teacher also explained that the value of tolerance and cooperation is instilled through group discussion activities.

Q: "How do teachers instill the value of tolerance and cooperation in PKn learning?"

"During group discussions, students learn to respect their friends' opinions even though they are different. There they learn tolerance and cooperation." (GK-2 interview, May 12, 2026).

Teachers also instill the value of honesty during the implementation of online-based evaluations.

Q: "How do teachers instill the value of honesty in students in digital-based civic learning?"

"Even though the assignments are done online, students are still reminded to be honest and not to cheat on their friends' work." (GK-1 interview, May 11, 2026).

These results show that character education in PKn learning is not only given in theory, but also applied through habituation of students' behavior in daily learning activities.

Tolerance is shown through class discussion activities when students learn to respect the opinions of their peers. In addition, teachers also instill the value of honesty through the implementation of quizzes or online-based evaluations that prioritize students' honesty in doing assignments. PKn learning not only focuses on delivering citizenship materials, but also forms positive habits and behaviors of students in daily life.

3. The Impact of Transformation on Students

The transformation of character education through PKn learning has a positive impact on elementary school students. Based on the results of observations, students became more active in participating in learning and were more courageous in expressing their opinions during discussions. The use of digital media in learning also increases students' motivation and interest in learning.



Figure 2. Student Activity in Digital-Based PKn Learning

(Source: Research Field Documentation, '11 May 2026)

Based on the image, it can be seen that students are more active and enthusiastic in participating in digital-based PKn learning. Students not only listen to the teacher's explanations, but also engage in discussion activities and the use of digital learning media.

One of the students said that learning using digital media makes the learning process more enjoyable.

Q: "What do students think about the use of digital videos and quizzes in PKn learning?"

"If you learn to use videos and quizzes, it will be more exciting, so you won't get bored quickly." (SW-1 interview, May 12, 2026).

The teacher also explained that students began to use the internet as a means of learning and showed increased cooperation in group learning.

Q: "How do students' attitudes change after the implementation of digital-based civic learning?"

"Now students are more active in working together in groups and more responsible when given assignments." (GK-2 interview, May 12, 2026).

Thus, the transformation of digital-based PKn learning has a positive impact on student involvement, learning motivation, and student character formation.

In addition, students are starting to use the internet and digital technology as a means of learning, not just for entertainment. The value of cooperation and student responsibility has also increased, especially in group activities and digital-based task completion. The transformation of PKn learning in the digital era also helps students understand the importance of using technology wisely and responsibly.

4. Obstacles in Character Education Transformation

Although the transformation of digital-based PKn learning has a positive impact, its implementation still faces several obstacles. Some teachers still have difficulties in operating digital learning media and technology so that their use has not been maximized.



Figure 3. The Use of Gadgets by Siwa SD
(Source: Researcher's Field Documentation, May 11, 2026)

Based on the image, the use of gadgets in elementary school students is one of the challenges in character formation in the digital era. If not properly supervised, the use of technology can have a negative impact on student behavior.

The principal explained that the use of digital learning media by some teachers is still not optimal in the learning process.

Q: "Are there any obstacles in the implementation of digital-based PKn learning in schools?"

"Teachers are still not optimal in using digital learning media in the learning process." (KS-1 interview, May 13, 2026).

In addition, the teacher also said that students still often use gadgets to play instead of studying.

Q: "What are the challenges in shaping students' character in the digital era?"

"Sometimes students use their cellphones more often to play than study, so they need supervision from parents." (GK-1 interview, May 11, 2026).

The principal added that cooperation between schools and parents is indispensable in shaping students' character in the digital era.

Q: "In your opinion, what is needed so that the formation of students' character in the digital era can run well?"

"Character building in the digital era cannot only be done by schools, but needs support and supervision from parents at home." (KS-1 interview, May 13, 2026).

Thus, the transformation of character education through PKn learning in the digital era requires the support of facilities, teacher competence, and cooperation between schools and parents so that the process of forming students' character can run optimally.

In addition, the limitation of facilities such as learning tools and internet networks is an obstacle in the learning process. The negative influence of social media and excessive use of gadgets on students is also a challenge in character building. On the other hand, the lack of parental supervision of the use of technology at home causes students to still often use gadgets to play instead of studying. This condition shows that the transformation of character education in the digital era requires cooperation between teachers, schools, and parents so that the formation of students' character can run optimally.

Discussion

1. Transformation of Civil Servant Learning as a Means of Character Education

The results of the study show that PKn learning has undergone a transformation from conventional learning to more contextual, interactive, and digital-based learning. PKn no longer only emphasizes memorizing the material, but also provides a learning experience that actively engages students (Setiowati et al., 2022). The use of learning videos, interactive media, and digital quizzes makes the learning process more interesting so that students can more easily understand civic values and character (Suyitno, 2021). These findings are in line with 21st century learning theories that emphasize critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity skills in the learning process (Agustinovaa, 2022). Thus, the transformation of digital-based PKn learning is an important step in creating learning that is more active, interesting, and relevant to the needs of the 21st century so that it is able to strengthen students' understanding and character formation more effectively.

The transformation is also in accordance with the theory of constructivism which states that students build their own knowledge through learning experiences (Suryani & Hasanah, 2023). In digital-based PKn learning, students not only receive information from teachers, but also actively seek, understand, and discuss learning materials (Rahmadila, N & Nurjanah, 2024) . Thus, learning becomes student-centered

learning that is able to support the formation of student character more effectively.

2. Integration of Character Values in PKn Learning

Character education in PKn learning is carried out through the integration of character values in learning activities and daily habits (Subarkah & Ahmad, 2022). The values of discipline, responsibility, tolerance, cooperation, and honesty emerge through digital-based discussions, group work, presentations, and evaluations (Suwahyu, I & Ashadi, 2023). Teachers also play a role model in guiding students to use technology positively and responsibly (Son, 2023). Thus, the integration of character education in digital-based civic learning not only strengthens students' understanding of citizenship materials, but also forms positive attitudes and behaviors that are important in daily life in the digital era.

This finding is in accordance with Thomas Lickona's theory of character education which emphasizes that character education includes *moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action*. In PKn learning, students not only understand character values in theory, but also get used to applying them in learning activities. In addition, the implementation of character education is also in line with the Character Education Strengthening (PPK) program which emphasizes the importance of building students' character through the learning process.

3. Challenges of Character Education in the Digital Era

The development of digital technology provides benefits in PKn learning, but also presents challenges in character formation of elementary school students (Widiani et al., 2024). Uncontrolled use of social media and gadgets can affect student behavior, such as decreased learning discipline and low direct social interaction (Fatonah, 2022). Therefore, supervision and assistance from teachers and parents are very necessary so that students are able to use technology wisely.

In addition, the importance of digital literacy in elementary school students is one of the main aspects of character education in the digital era. Students need to be guided to understand the ethics of using technology and social media in order to be able to become responsible digital citizens. This is in line with the concept of digital citizenship which emphasizes the importance of a wise, ethical, and responsible attitude in the use of digital technology. Thus, character education through civic education in the digital era not only shapes students' social character, but also builds awareness of digital ethics in daily life.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the transformation of character education through the learning of Civic Education (PKn) in elementary school students in the digital era has had a positive influence on the formation of students' character. This transformation is shown through changes in PKn learning that is no longer teacher-centered, but emphasizes the active involvement of students by utilizing digital media and technology in the learning process.

The implementation of character education in civic education learning is carried out through the cultivation of the values of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, tolerance, honesty, and love of the homeland which are integrated into learning activities and daily habits at school. The use of digital media such as learning videos, interactive presentations,

and online learning platforms can increase students' interest in learning while helping teachers in conveying character values in a more interesting and contextual way.

However, the implementation of character education transformation still faces several obstacles, such as the limitation of teachers' ability to utilize digital technology, the lack of learning support facilities, and the negative influence of the use of social media and gadgets on students. Therefore, cooperation between teachers, schools, and parents is needed in guiding and supervising the use of technology so that student character formation can run optimally. Thus, PKn learning in the digital era has an important role as a means of transforming character education in elementary school students. Through innovative, interactive, and value-based learning Pancasila, students are expected to be able to become a generation that is intelligent, characterful, responsible, and wise in utilizing digital technology.

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