



Preventive Character Education Strategies against the Negative Impact of Social Media Influencers on the Betawi Alpha Generation

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study focuses on the influence of social media influencers on Generation Alpha within the Betawi community, aiming to examine how digital media exposure shapes children's moral values, communication ethics, and cultural identity in traditional societies facing rapid digital globalization.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative research methodology using a phenomenological approach to explore participants' lived experiences and perspectives. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observations conducted in several Betawi communities and schools. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of how influencer-driven digital content affects communication practices, behavioral norms, and the internalization of moral values within the Betawi socio-cultural context

Main Findings: The findings indicate that exposure to influencer-generated content has contributed to shifts in moral reasoning, communication ethics, and cultural awareness among Generation Alpha. Children tend to adopt informal communication styles, reduced respect-based interaction patterns, and value orientations that differ from traditional Betawi norms. These changes are shaped by digital social environments, family mediation, and peer interactions, reflecting broader transformations in social behavior in the digital era. From a social studies perspective, these findings imply the need to integrate character education that emphasizes ethical communication, cultural literacy, and critical media awareness into learning practices. Social studies education can serve as a strategic space to strengthen students' moral judgment and cultural identity amid ongoing digital influences

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study offers originality by foregrounding the role of influencers and digital content creators in shaping character values, communication ethics, and cultural identity among Generation Alpha within a specific indigenous cultural context. By situating the analysis within Betawi society, the study contributes new insights into culturally grounded character education strategies in the field of social science education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Generation Alpha refers to children born between 2010 and 2024 who have grown up in an era of rapid digitalization and unprecedented technological advancement. This generation has been exposed to digital devices, online platforms, and algorithm-driven content from early childhood, shaping their cognitive development and daily behaviors differently from previous cohorts [1].

The rapid expansion of digital media, especially social media, has increased exposure to content produced by influencers and digital creators. While technology can support creativity and learning, not all influencer content promotes constructive values. Some content may normalize inappropriate language and unethical behaviors, which can shape communication patterns and moral awareness in children [2].

Exposure to digital media without sufficient critical thinking filters increases the risk that negative behaviors are internalized into daily life. Unsurprisingly, this can affect children's emotional and social development, often exacerbated when parental or educational guidance is limited [3].

Despite these concerns, digitization also offers benefits such as enhanced access to information, opportunities for creative expression, and improved digital literacy skills when used wisely. Studies recommend strategic guidance and structured character education to maximize positive outcomes of digital media use [4].

From the character education perspective, moral values and ethical communication are constructed not only through family and school but also through continuous interaction with social and digital environments. Without adequate supervision, traditional value systems may weaken, reducing children's sensitivity to respectful communication and community responsibility [5].

Prior research on Generation Alpha has explored broad digital media effects and parental guidance practices, but few studies examine how influencer-driven content specifically affects moral values, communication ethics, and cultural identity within indigenous or culturally rooted communities from a social sciences education standpoint. Most existing work focuses on general behavior or learning styles rather than localized character outcomes [6].

There is thus a clear gap between general digital media research and the specific impacts of social media influencers on character formation among culturally distinct child populations. Previous studies have yet to integrate digital media influence with local cultural contexts and social sciences educational strategies, particularly within the Betawi community. This gap highlights the need for more targeted inquiry into culturally grounded character development in the digital age.

Understanding these contextual effects is urgent because children's moral frameworks are increasingly shaped online, potentially outpacing traditional cultural value transmission. This raises pressing questions about how cultural identity and ethical communication can be sustained in the face of globalized digital content.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of social media influencers on Generation Alpha within the Betawi community and to propose preventive character education strategies grounded in social and cultural values. The focus on character education within social sciences offers a novel contribution by connecting digital influence with culturally responsive educational practices, bridging a gap in current literature.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employs empirical qualitative research with a phenomenological approach, aiming to understand the subjective experiences of individuals regarding the influence of social media influencers. This approach focuses on participants' interpretations, worldviews, and lived experiences without researcher prejudice [7].

2.2. Research Subjects and Location

The research subjects consisted of five Generation Alpha members from the Betawi community, two teachers, two parents, and two community leaders. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct experiences with influencer content. To enrich the data, snowball sampling was also applied. The research was conducted in Bekasi Regency, Jakarta, and Depok.

2.3. Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. The instruments used included interview guidelines, observation sheets, and supporting documents. In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary instrument to ensure contextual and cultural sensitivity [8].

2.4. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model and Sugiyono (2020), consisting of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The process was conducted continuously and interactively to ensure credibility and depth of analysis [9].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on our research findings, preventive strategies to minimize the negative impact of influencers on Generation Alpha, especially on Betawi children, can be divided into three main aspects. The first is the role of the family or parents, who are the main foundation in shaping character, setting an example, and supervising children's use of digital media. Second is the community environment, which plays an important role in creating a positive social culture, fostering a sense of togetherness, and providing social control over children's behavior. Third is the school environment, which serves as a place of formal education as well as a vehicle for moral development, discipline, and critical thinking skills so that children are able to filter information wisely. These three aspects complement each other and have a significant influence in shaping the behavior, moral values, and identity of the Betawi tribe's Alpha generation, enabling them to grow into individuals with strong character who are not easily influenced by negative external factors, including content disseminated by influencers on social media [10].

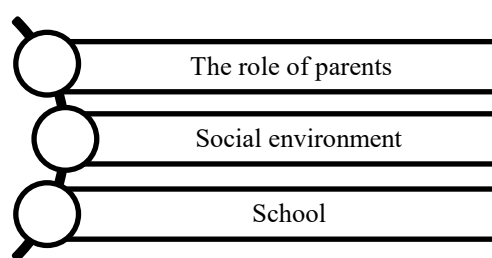


Figure 1. Factors Influencing Character Development of Generation Alpha

Data presented in tables, graphs, or other visualizations must be arranged clearly and systematically so that readers can easily understand the findings resulting from the research. The discussion section is where the author can interpret the results that have been obtained. Here, the author needs to compare the findings with existing literature, analyze whether the research results are by previously stated theories or hypotheses, and explore the implications of the findings. The author also needs to explain the limitations of this study and how these limitations may affect the results or generalization of the findings. In addition, the discussion should lead to a discussion of the relevance of the findings to theory or practical applications, as well as suggestions for further research. This section is an opportunity to dig deeper into the results' meaning and provide a broader view of the topic being studied.

3.1. Generation Alpha Betawi Tribe

Generation Alpha, defined as individuals born between 2010 and 2024, is the first generation to grow up fully immersed in digital technology. Their early exposure to smartphones, the internet, and social media has significantly shaped their patterns of communication, learning processes, and character development. Within this context, the character formation of Betawi Generation Alpha is increasingly influenced by digital environments, particularly social media influencers, who function as powerful role models through continuous exposure. Based on the research findings and supported by interviews with community leaders, the character values of Betawi Generation Alpha can be categorized into five main dimensions of character values, namely moral values, social ethic, responsibility, politeness, and cultural identity [11].

a. Moral Values

Moral values refer to children's ability to distinguish between right and wrong and to internalize ethical principles in daily behavior. The findings indicate that frequent exposure to influencer content containing inappropriate language, permissive lifestyles, or norm violations contributes to a weakening of children's moral judgment. This phenomenon aligns with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that children learn behaviors by observing and imitating figures they admire, particularly when those figures receive social reinforcement such as popularity and admiration. International studies confirm that influencer-based content can accelerate moral disengagement among children when digital consumption is not guided by value-based supervision [12]. This process reflects what scholars describe as character erosion, where prolonged exposure to value-neutral or value-conflicting content gradually weakens moral sensitivity.

b. Social Ethics

Social ethics encompass attitudes such as empathy, cooperation, respect, and community awareness. Betawi culture traditionally emphasizes *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and collective responsibility. However, the findings suggest that excessive gadget use and influencer-centered lifestyles reduce direct social interaction, leading to increased individualism among Generation Alpha. This shift is consistent with international findings indicating that high social media engagement among children is associated with decreased face-to-face

interaction and reduced empathy [13]. Community leaders interviewed in this study also expressed concerns that children are becoming less responsive to social norms and communal values, reinforcing the need for social environments that model ethical interaction beyond digital spaces.

c. Responsibility

Responsibility as a character value relates to children's self-discipline, accountability, and ability to manage obligations. The findings reveal that uncontrolled screen time and influencer-driven consumption patterns often lead to reduced responsibility, such as neglect of school tasks, decreased physical activity, and dependency on instant gratification. Demonstrates that excessive screen exposure in early childhood is linked to lower self-regulation and attention control. This supports the argument that without parental guidance and structured routines, influencer content can indirectly undermine children's sense of responsibility, contributing further to character erosion [14].

d. Politeness

Politeness is a central value in Betawi culture, reflected in respectful language use, courteous behavior, and appropriate social conduct. However, the findings indicate that children increasingly imitate informal, aggressive, or disrespectful communication styles commonly displayed by influencers. This imitation process again reflects observational learning, where repeated exposure normalizes impolite expressions. International studies highlight similar concerns, noting that children exposed to aggressive or disrespectful online communication are more likely to replicate such behavior offline. This underscores the importance of reinforcing politeness through family modeling, community norms, and school-based character education [15].

e. Cultural Identity

Cultural identity represents a crucial character value for Betawi Generation Alpha, encompassing language use, traditional practices, and cultural pride. The findings indicate that although modernization and digital globalization present challenges, Betawi cultural values remain a potential protective factor when actively reinforced. The use of Betawi language express, participation in traditional arts, and community-based cultural activities contribute to strengthening children's cultural identity. International literature supports the role of local culture as a buffer against negative globalization effects, emphasizing that strong cultural identity enhances moral resilience and self-concept among children.

Social media is a product of the creation of smartphones in this digital technology era. Social media is a new tool that connects people in the digital age. Social media has created a new revolution in communication, which was previously traditional and limited. The development of social media has become the beginning of digital technology significantly changing communication styles and becoming a new culture in the dynamics of modern society. Generation Alpha are those who were exposed to technology at an earlier age and grew up in an era where digital technology has become an integral part of daily life [16].

McCrindle states that 2.5 million Generation Alpha children are born worldwide every week. According to him, Generation A is the generation most familiar with the internet throughout history. McCrindle also predicts that Generation Alpha will be inseparable from gadgets, less sociable, less creative, and more individualistic. Generation Alpha wants instant gratification and does not value the process. Their obsession with gadgets makes them socially alienated [17].

"In my opinion, children today are beginning to lose their sense of community spirit and are becoming more individualistic. One of the contributing factors is certainly the character building that takes place within the family itself, as well as social media, as children grow older." (W/TM/1/120825)

The Betawi people are known for their practice of mutual cooperation and close kinship, where each individual has a responsibility to their community. Strengthening the institution of mutual cooperation is very important in the context of society, not only that, but also the use of the Betawi language with word endings using the vowel consonant "E" such as "Aye", 'Siape' "Mangkanye" etc., because it can increase the consolidation of traditional values which are very important for maintaining cultural identity. In this context, local wisdom values are one example of how the Betawi people preserve their cultural heritage [18].

Betawi culture is the result of an assimilation process involving various cultural elements from specific groups that previously existed in Jakarta, such as the Chinese, Arabs, Portuguese, and Dutch. As a result, many arts and cultures emerged due to this cultural mix. Honestly, many young people, even guardians who grew up in Jakarta, do not understand the existence of the Betawi people and their identity. Generally, they only know a little about Betawi culture, such as the making of Ondel-ondel, kerak telur cuisine, kicir-kicir melodies, and the like, without the ability to understand the quality and importance of the insights contained therein. As an ethnic group with a rich diversity of cultures, there is a need for education to understand the values and meanings contained in each of its art forms [19].

Based on the interviews we conducted with community leaders, we obtained valuable information about the characteristics and behavior of Generation Alpha, especially among Betawi children. The opinions of these community leaders are in line with the findings of our research, in which they assess that Generation Alpha has its own characteristics in the way they think, behave, and interact with their environment. This is influenced by the rapid development of digital technology and different parenting patterns compared to previous generations. Community leaders also emphasized that even though the Betawi tribe's Generation Alpha is growing up in the midst of modernization, Betawi cultural values remain an important factor that influences the formation of their identity, attitudes, and morals. Thus, the results of these interviews not only reinforce the research data, but also provide a more realistic picture of the challenges and opportunities in educating and guiding Generation Alpha to remain rooted in local culture while being able to adapt to the times [20].

The use of social media, especially by the Alpha generation of the Betawi tribe, has a significant influence on children's moral development. This influence is closely related to the content creators or influencers they follow and watch. Some influencers are indeed capable of having a positive impact, such as fostering motivation, broadening horizons, and inspiring children to be creative [21]. However, there is also a lot of content that has a negative impact, whether through inappropriate language, lifestyles that do not conform to norms, or values that conflict with morals and culture. This situation requires full supervision from parents and the surrounding environment of children's activities on social media. This supervision is not only in the form of limiting usage time, but also includes guidance in choosing content that is age-appropriate and relevant to positive values. Without clear supervision and boundaries, children risk becoming addicted to social media, being exposed to information that is not appropriate for their cognitive development, and even imitating the bad behavior displayed by the influencers they admire [22].

Furthermore, the role of parents also includes providing education on digital literacy so that children are able to understand how to sort information, filter content, and be aware of the consequences of every behavior displayed in the virtual world. In addition, it is also important to instill Betawi cultural values that are rich in religious attitudes, politeness, and respect for others, so that children have a strong moral foundation in facing the rapid flow of digital globalization. Therefore, researchers have proposed several preventive strategies to minimize the negative impact of influencers on the Betawi Alpha generation. These strategies include the role of parents, social environment, and school [23].

3.2. Preventive Strategies Against the Negative Impact of Influencers

Based on the categorized character values above, preventive strategies to minimize the negative impact of influencers on Betawi Generation Alpha are structured around three interrelated environments, family, community, and school, as illustrated in the conceptual framework.

1. The Role of Parents in Strengthening Character Values

Parents play a fundamental role in shaping children's character values, particularly moral values, responsibility, and politeness. As primary gatekeepers of digital access, parents are responsible for guiding children's media consumption, selecting age-appropriate content, and modeling ethical digital behavior. From a theoretical perspective, parental involvement functions as a mediating factor in observational learning, helping children interpret and evaluate influencer behavior critically. International research emphasizes that values-based digital mediation by parents significantly reduces the negative psychological and behavioral impacts of social media on children [24]. Parents play a key role in preventive strategies to minimize the negative impact of influencers on children, especially during early childhood and elementary school, when children's critical thinking skills are still developing and they are easily influenced by influencers on social media. As the closest and first parties to provide access to gadgets, parents are at the forefront of controlling and accompanying children in their consumption of digital content. Providing supervision and limiting children's use of social media, such as the types of content they watch, guiding children to follow influencers who present educational content that is in line with moral values, and ensuring the proportional use of gadgets. This supervision is not only limited to the duration of gadget use, but must also include monitoring the content consumed by children, including the influencers or public figures they follow [25].

This is important because early childhood and elementary school children tend to imitate the behavior, language, and lifestyle they see on social media, which is a preventive strategy that can be implemented. If parents do not provide strong supervision and strict time limits, excessive use of gadgets can have a negative impact on children's psychology, such as irritability, withdrawal, concentration disorders, and reduced ability to socialize directly [26]. This is reinforced by an article by Deni Setiawan, which states that children who spend too much time using gadgets or social media become lazy to do physical activities, become easily irritable, become rebellious when told off, imitate the behavior they see in games, and experience eye strain from playing with gadgets for too long [27]. Not only that, this is also supported by an article by Linos Merin 2024 which states that excessive screen use is associated with poor sleep duration and quality, as well as internal and external behavioral problems and several cognitive disorders [28].

“Of course, the role of the family is very much needed in accompanying the growth and development of the younger generation. Not to forget the positive synergy between the environment and the school, so that the younger generation can grow into individuals who embody the values of Pancasila.” (W/TM/120825)

Therefore, the role of parents is very important in supervising their children, especially in relation to the content displayed by influencers on social media. This supervision is necessary because children in early childhood and elementary school are still at a vulnerable stage of development, where they easily imitate the behavior, language, and lifestyle they see without being able to filter whether it is in accordance with prevailing norms and values [29]. Emotional closeness and the intensity of daily interactions give parents a greater role than other parties, such as teachers or peers, in guiding children to avoid the negative effects of influencer influence. Through consistent supervision, parents can ensure that children only consume content that is positive, educational, and age-appropriate, while limiting access to content that has the potential to adversely affect children's psychological, social, and moral development [30].

2. Community Environment and Social Ethics Development

The Community environment contributes significantly to reinforcing social ethics, responsibility, and cultural identity. Positive community norms provide real life role models that counterbalance virtual influencers. Activities such as community service, cultural events, and religious gatherings create meaningful social experiences that strengthen ethical awareness. Studies conducted in various cultural contexts show that strong community engagement enhances children's moral reasoning and social responsibility, particularly in collectivist societies. Thus, the community acts as a social control mechanism that prevents children from uncritically adopting influencer driven lifestyles [31]. The community environment also plays an important role in preventing or minimizing the negative impact of influencers on the Betawi tribe's alpha generation. The surrounding environment can be a real role model in terms of attitude, ethics, and problem solving. This helps children not only idolize influencers, but also learn from real figures around them. Strong community norms and values can act as a barrier preventing the Alpha generation from blindly adopting influencers' lifestyles that are incompatible with local culture, particularly Betawi culture. For example, community service activities, local traditions, and real social interactions can enrich children's experiences outside the digital world. The community is not merely an accessory but rather an important fortress to keep the Alpha generation mentally healthy and critical, and not completely swept away by the influence of influencers [32].

In modern times like today, morals are not only influenced by environmental factors, but the influence of technological advances and social media has a huge impact on children's morals. This is because children now spend more time playing with gadgets than socializing with people in their community. The behavior of children today, especially the younger generation in elementary school, is very concerning because we can see for ourselves the strange things happening today, where children's behavior does not reflect good and proper morals. This is not a reflection of their individual upbringing; we can see this from their lack of kindness towards their teachers, their poor manners towards their friends, and their lack of responsibility for what has been shared with them [33].

The community environment plays a very important role in preventing the negative impact of influencers, especially on children. At home, parents can supervise what content their children are allowed to watch. However, parental supervision alone is not always enough, because we do not fully know how children behave when they are outside the home or when interacting with their social environment. If a family lives in a positive community environment, one that sets a good example, maintains proper speech, and upholds prevailing values and norms, children will more easily develop into good individuals. A healthy environment can be a supporting factor in building children's morality, so that they are protected from bad influences, including influencer content that is not appropriate for their age. In this case, children and families not only receive supervision from within the home, but also gain positive influences from outside the home [34].

Conversely, if the family is in a negative social environment, this has the potential to shape the child's personality in a negative way. For example, when the environment is accustomed to using harsh language, violating norms, or even deliberately introducing children to content that is not age-appropriate, children will be more easily influenced. Without guidance and positive influences from their environment, children may grow up with deviant habits and behaviors. Ultimately, the formation of a child's personality is also greatly influenced by their own choices and decisions [35]. However, it is wiser to take preventive measures early on rather than allowing children to be exposed to things that have the potential to damage their morals. Therefore, it is important for parents to pay attention to who their children associate with and the social environment in which they grow up. By choosing the right environment, children will be better protected from the negative impact of influencers and can develop into individuals with good character, who are wise in responding to information, and able to distinguish between what should be emulated and what should be avoided [36].

3. School Environment and character Education Curriculum

School play a strategic role in integrating Character Values into formal education. Beyond academic instruction, school serve as institutions for socialization, moral development, and cultural transmission.

Incorporating values based digital literacy into the curriculum enables facts from persuasion, and align digital behavior with ethical principles. International evidence suggests that character education programs combined with digital literacy significantly improve students moral reasoning and online behavior. Collaboration between schools, families, and cultural institutions further strengthens the effectiveness of these preventive strategies. The school environment plays a strategic role in preventive efforts to minimize the negative impact of influencers on the Betawi tribe's alpha generation. School is not only a place for academic learning, but also a place for children to shape their character, moral values, and cultural identity [37]. For Betawi children, school can strengthen local cultural values, such as through mutual cooperation activities, or learning about things related to the Betawi tribe, such as participating in martial arts, writing poetry, and so on. This can serve as a bulwark to prevent them from being easily swept away by lifestyles or behaviors of influencers that are not in line with cultural values [38]. Other activities that can be carried out in schools include teachers teaching critical thinking about digital content: how to distinguish facts from opinions, educational content from hidden advertisements, and what is in line with cultural norms. A digital literacy-based curriculum can help the alpha generation be wiser in using social media and assessing influencers [39].

Schools can collaborate with parents and Betawi traditional leaders to create programs that promote local culture and values, such as holding competitions or other events. The school environment plays an important role in preventive strategies to counter the impact of influencers on the Betawi alpha generation. By integrating digital literacy, character education, local culture, and collaboration with the community, schools can become a stronghold so that children not only imitate influencers but also grow up with a strong identity as an alpha generation rooted in Betawi culture. Schools are institutions where the process of socialization takes place, influencing children's personalities and social skills. Schools socialize values in community life, so they are seen as a place of transition from family life to community life. Schools play an important role in preparing students to solve current and future life problems to face the challenges of an increasingly globalized era [40].

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research highlighting the significant influence of social media influencers on children's character formation. Several recent studies report that uncontrolled exposure to influencer content affects children's moral reasoning, communication ethics, and social behavior, particularly among early digital-native generations [41]. Previous research also emphasizes that children tend to imitate influencer behavior due to repeated exposure and perceived social rewards, supporting the relevance of Bandura's social learning framework in digital contexts [42]. Moreover, studies focusing on character education confirm that parental supervision, community engagement, and school-based character education act as protective factors against the negative impact of digital media [43]. These findings support the results of this research, which demonstrate that character values among Betawi Generation Alpha are shaped through the interaction of family, social environment, and school, reinforcing the importance of integrated preventive strategies grounded in cultural and social values.

This research contributes both theoretically and practically to the field of social sciences education. Theoretically, it enriches the discussion on Generation Alpha by integrating influencer studies with local cultural perspectives, particularly within the Betawi community. Practically, the findings provide guidance for parents, educators, and community leaders in developing preventive strategies to strengthen children's moral values, social ethics, responsibility, politeness, and cultural identity amid rapid digitalization. The proposed strategies can be used as a reference for character education programs that are culturally responsive and relevant to contemporary digital challenges. However, this study has several limitations. First, the number of participants was limited and focused on specific regions, which may restrict the generalization of the findings to other cultural communities. Second, the qualitative phenomenological approach emphasizes subjective experiences, which may be influenced by participants' personal interpretations and social contexts. Future research is recommended to involve larger samples, comparative cultural settings, or mixed-method approaches to provide a broader understanding of the impact of social media influencers on character development across diverse communities.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the Betawi Generation Alpha is growing up amid rapid developments in digital technology and social media, which present both opportunities and challenges for character formation, moral development, and cultural identity. Social media influencers have a significant impact on children's behavior, influencing their values, communication styles, and daily conduct, both positively and negatively. Therefore, preventive strategies involving three main environments—family, community, and school are essential.

The family plays a crucial role in supervising children's digital media use, providing digital literacy education, and instilling Betawi moral and cultural values from an early age. The community environment functions as a social fortress that preserves local wisdom, mutual cooperation, and provides real-life role models. Meanwhile, schools serve not only as centers for academic learning but also as institutions for character education, digital literacy, and the reinforcement of Betawi cultural values.

These three environments complement one another and form an integrated system for character development. Through effective synergy between family, community, and school, the Betawi Generation Alpha is expected to grow into individuals with strong character, critical thinking skills, cultural awareness, and the ability to respond wisely to the influence of social media and influencers.

Future studies are recommended to involve a larger and more diverse sample, including comparative studies across different ethnic or cultural communities. Employing mixed-methods or longitudinal research designs may provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of social media influencers on character development. Further research could also explore the role of specific types of influencer content, digital platforms, and educational interventions in strengthening character education in the digital era.

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