

The Internalization of Religious and Cultural Values in Shaping a Young Generation of Character in the Modern Era

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ABSTRACT

Globalization and digitalization have triggered rapid and complex social changes, particularly for the younger generation as the group most adaptable to technological advancements. These transformations present not only opportunities but also serious challenges, including identity crises, moral degradation, and cultural disruption. This study aims to analyze the influence of globalization and digitalization on changes in the values and identity of the younger generation, the urgency of internalizing religious and cultural values in character formation, and strategies for their implementation in the modern era. The study employs a qualitative approach using literature review (library research) and descriptive-analytical analysis, grounded in the theory of value internalization and the theory of globalization. The findings indicate that globalization leads to value instability, a shift of local cultures toward the dominance of global culture, and the emergence of generational value gaps. The reinforcement of religious values serves as a moral guide, while cultural values preserve collective identity and social sustainability. Strategies for value internalization are implemented through the synergy of family, education, and society in a sustainable and contextual manner.

Keywords: internalization of values, religion, culture, youth, globalization, digitalization, sustainability

1. Introduction

Globalization and digitalization have brought about rapid and complex social changes, particularly for the younger generation, which is the group most responsive to technological advancements. These changes are characterized by increasing global connectivity, which enables the unimpeded cross-border exchange of information, values, and culture. Digital technology, particularly the internet and social media, has become the primary space for the younger generation to interact, learn, and shape their identities. The unlimited flow of information offers significant opportunities to enhance the knowledge, creativity, and innovation of the younger

generation. This phenomenon is further reinforced by the high rate of internet usage among the younger generation in Indonesia. According to a report by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2024), the national internet penetration rate reached 78.19% or approximately 215 million users with the 13–18 age group at 99.16% and the 19–34 age group at 98.64%. These figures indicate that nearly all young people in Indonesia are connected to the internet and have made the digital space a central part of their daily lives. Additionally, a report by We Are Social (2024) shows that the average daily internet usage in Indonesia is 7 hours and 38 minutes, with social media usage accounting for about 3 hours and 11 minutes per day. The digital activities of the younger generation are dominated by the use of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, as well as streaming and digital communication.

Amid the increasingly intense tide of globalization and digitalization, the younger generation faces complex challenges in filtering the information that enters their lives. Easy access to various sources of information is not always accompanied by adequate critical literacy skills, which has the potential to lead to a disorientation of values. Young people often face a clash of values between local culture, rich in meaning, and global culture, which tends to be pragmatic and instant. This situation creates confusion in determining a consistent stance, identity, and life orientation. Furthermore, the acceleration of social change driven by technological advancements further weakens the process of internalizing traditional values that were previously passed down through generations. These values often struggle to adapt to the fast-paced and competitive dynamics of the modern era. A lack of preparedness in facing these changes can undermine the moral and spiritual foundations of the younger generation. In this context, globalization and digitalization are not merely seen as symbols of progress but also as arenas of value contestation that require both individual and societal readiness. Atoyan et al. (2023) assert that digital transformation brings structural changes in how individuals understand and interpret social reality. Meanwhile, Petrosyants (2025) demonstrates that without the reinforcement of adaptive values, the younger generation is vulnerable to an identity crisis amidst the surging tide of globalization.

The phenomena of identity crisis, moral degradation, and the erosion of cultural values indicate that modernization does not always go hand in hand with the strengthening of individual character. Today's younger generation is in a complex transitional phase between preserving traditional values and following the ever-evolving tide of global modernity (Buribayev, Khamzina, & Buribayeva, 2025). In this situation, many young people experience confusion in defining their identity and the direction of their lives. The dominance of global culture—which tends to be instant, consumerist, and individualistic significantly influences the mindset and behavior of the younger generation. Furthermore, the intense use of social media reinforces the tendency to build an identity based on image and social recognition, rather than on deeply held values. This condition has the potential to give rise to a fragile, superficial identity that is easily altered by the pressures of the digital social environment. Furthermore, moral degradation can be observed through a decline in respect, responsibility, and social concern in daily life (Aguessy & Fandy, 2025). This phenomenon reflects a significant shift in values among the younger generation. If not properly addressed, this situation could lead to the loss of a meaningful life orientation. Therefore, systematic and sustained efforts are needed to reinvigorate the role of religious and cultural values in shaping the character of the younger generation.

In this context, religious and cultural values play a vital role as the foundation for shaping the character of the younger generation. Religious values provide moral and spiritual guidelines that serve as the basis for thinking, behaving, and acting. These values help individuals distinguish between right and wrong and provide direction in living their lives. Meanwhile, culture provides a concrete space for practice through traditions, norms, and customs that are alive in society. Cultural values also teach about togetherness, social responsibility, and respect for the environment. When religious and cultural values are properly internalized, individuals with strong character and a clear identity will emerge. This internalization process is carried out not only through formal education but also through the family and social environment. Setting a good example and consistent practice are effective methods for instilling these values in daily life. Thus, the younger generation not only understands these values but is also able to put them

into practice. Therefore, the internalization of religious and cultural values is a crucial strategy in maintaining a balance between modernity and identity, as well as in building a sustainable civilization.

This study aims to analyze the impact of modernization on the process of internalizing religious and cultural values in shaping the character of the younger generation, identify the impact of globalization and digitalization on values and identity, and formulate strategies for internalizing values to achieve sustainability, with an emphasis on three key areas: (1) The challenges posed by globalization and digitalization to the values and identity of the younger generation; (2) the urgency of internalizing religious and cultural values in shaping the character of the younger generation; and (3) strategies for implementing religious and cultural values in fostering a younger generation of strong character. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of character and cultural education studies, as well as practical benefits as a reference for educators, families, and policymakers in strengthening religious and cultural values to foster a generation of youth with strong character.

This article employs a qualitative approach using library research to examine various sources, such as scientific journals, academic books, and relevant previous research findings. Data collection was conducted through documentary analysis, while data analysis utilized a descriptive-analytical approach to interpret concepts and theories in depth. This research is based on two main theoretical foundations: the theory of value internalization, which emphasizes the process of instilling values until they become part of an individual's personality; and the theory of globalization, which explains the dynamics of social and cultural change in modern society. These two theories are used to understand the relationship between the character-building process of the younger generation and the influence of globalization and digitalization in contemporary social life.

2. Discussion

2.1 The Challenges of Globalization and Digitalization on the Values and Identity of the Younger Generation in the Modern Era

Globalization and digitalization are two major forces shaping the dynamics of young people's lives in the modern era. Globalization enables the rapid exchange of cultures, values, and information without geographical boundaries, while digitalization has made technology the primary medium for social interaction. Young people are the group most intensely exposed to these two phenomena due to their high level of engagement in the digital space. Consequently, a virtual social space has emerged that differs in character from traditional social reality. In this space, values and norms are not always governed by clear social structures. These conditions mean that the younger generation is faced with a variety of value choices that are often contradictory. Tussupbekov et al. (2024) also state that identity in the context of globalization is dynamic and constantly changing. This indicates that the identity of the younger generation is becoming more fluid and adaptive. Thus, globalization and digitalization form the initial foundation for the emergence of challenges regarding the formation of values and identity.

The transformation of cultural transmission is the next challenge in the digital age. Whereas values and culture were previously passed down through direct interaction, in the modern era this process takes place through digital media and virtual spaces. The digital environment creates a dynamic yet complex ecosystem for the younger generation. In this context, Henry Jenkins explains the concept of participatory culture, in which individuals act as both producers and consumers of values. This situation opens up vast opportunities for creativity and self-expression. However, it also accelerates the influx of global values that are not always in harmony with local culture. Young people find it easier to adopt values without a process of deep reflection. Therefore, the main challenge lies in the ability to filter and interpret information. Value-based digital literacy becomes crucial to maintaining this balance.

The dominance of global culture also poses challenges in the form of shifts in local cultural values. Popular culture, which is synonymous with a consumerist, individualistic, and instant lifestyle, is increasingly influencing the life orientation of the younger generation. This phenomenon is known as cultural homogenization, which refers to the tendency for local cultural uniqueness to fade away. Younger generations tend to view global culture as more modern and relevant. Tiwari (2024)

states that globalization creates a tension between the preservation of local culture and global cultural exchange. Without the reinforcement of local values, cultural identity risks erosion. Additionally, Ardina et al. (2024) highlight the commercialization of cultural values that were previously considered sacred. This situation demonstrates that globalization not only alters cultural preferences but also the meaning of those values themselves.

In addition to cultural shifts, globalization and digitalization have also contributed to the moral decline of the younger generation. The erosion of values such as courtesy, responsibility, and social awareness has become an increasingly visible phenomenon in everyday life. A digital culture that emphasizes individual freedom often develops without being balanced by an awareness of social boundaries. Zygmunt Bauman (2000) describes modern society as a “liquid society” characterized by unstable values and weak social bonds. In such conditions, the younger generation finds itself in a state of moral uncertainty, making it difficult for them to distinguish between constructive and destructive values. Exposure to negative content in digital media further accelerates this process, especially when access to information is not accompanied by adequate filtering capabilities. Consequently, there is a tendency toward the normalization of deviant behavior that was previously considered contrary to social norms. This situation demonstrates that moral degradation is not merely an individual phenomenon but rather part of a structural challenge in the era of globalization and digitalization.

Another equally significant challenge is the emergence of a generational values gap. The older generation tends to uphold traditional values that have long served as a guide for life, while the younger generation is more open to new values emerging globally. This difference in perspective often creates tension regarding the understanding of cultural norms and identity. The younger generation views traditional values as less relevant to the dynamics of the times, whereas the older generation sees these changes as a threat to cultural continuity. This misunderstanding creates a widening social gap between generations. According to UNESCO (2017), a values gap can hinder the process of cultural transmission and weaken the continuity of collective identity. In this situation, the transmission of

values no longer occurs effectively, potentially leading to cultural disorientation among the younger generation.

Thus, globalization and digitalization have undeniably created a new social landscape fraught with complex values and identity dynamics for the younger generation. The unlimited flow of information, cross-cultural interactions, and the dominance of the digital space have made the process of identity formation increasingly unstable and fraught with conflicting values. The younger generation finds itself in an ambivalent situation, torn between preserving local values and adapting to ever-changing global demands. This situation underscores that the challenges faced are not merely external but also touch upon the internal dimensions of the individual in understanding themselves and their environment. Therefore, globalization and digitalization cannot be understood solely as phenomena of progress, but also as sources of socio-cultural tension that have the potential to weaken the consistency of values and the integrity of the younger generation's identity in the modern era.

2.2 The Urgency of Strengthening Religious and Cultural Values in Shaping the Character of the Younger Generation in the Modern Era

The era of globalization and digitalization has brought about rapid changes in various aspects of life, including the value systems embraced by the younger generation. These changes not only open up opportunities for progress but also present serious challenges in the form of moral degradation, cultural disruption, and an identity crisis. In such circumstances, religious and cultural values become crucial elements that must be strengthened as a foundation for shaping the character of the younger generation. Without adequate reinforcement of these values, the younger generation will face confusion in determining the direction of their lives and risk losing their identity amidst the complexities of modernity. For this reason, there are six fundamental reasons why religious and cultural values are of utmost urgency in the Character Formation of the Younger Generation in the Modern Era, including:

- a. As the foundation for shaping the character, identity, and life direction of the younger generation in the modern era.

Strengthening religious and cultural values is a fundamental necessity in shaping the strong character of the younger generation amid rapid social change. Values serve not only as normative guidelines but also as a source of meaning that provides direction in life. In the context of modernity, which is full of uncertainty, the younger generation needs a foundation of values capable of guiding them in making reflective life choices. Giddens's thinking, as cited in Lv et al. (2024), emphasizes that modernity demands that individuals continually evaluate themselves in dynamic situations; thus, without a strong foundation of values, individuals will lose their direction and the meaning of their lives.

b. In Response to the Erosion of the Value System in the Age of Globalization and Digitalization

The rise of globalization and digitalization has brought about rapid changes in social life, leading to a weakening of the value system within society. This situation has triggered moral degradation, cultural disruption, and an identity crisis among the younger generation, who are currently in the process of seeking their identity. The massive flow of global culture often displaces local values that previously served as guidelines in shaping character. Wang (2006) explains that rapid social change can lead to instability in an individual's value orientation. This is reinforced by Bauman's (2000) perspective on "liquid modernity," which suggests that values in modern society have become fluid and have lost their power as guiding principles for life. In such a situation, the younger generation tends to experience confusion in determining the direction of their lives and the principles they should uphold. This uncertainty leads to the emergence of behavior that is less value-oriented, such as a weakening of social responsibility and a decline in concern for the cultural environment. Therefore, targeted efforts are needed to reinvigorate the value system as the foundation for character development among the younger generation. This reinforcement must be carried out contextually so that it can address the challenges of the times without neglecting existing core values. Thus, the response to the weakening of the value system is not merely reactive but also a strategic step in building a younger generation with moral resilience and a strong identity in the modern era.

c. As a Moral Guide and a Means of Social Control

Religious values play a strategic role in shaping the character of the younger generation by instilling clear principles of right and wrong. These values not only provide moral guidance but also foster a deep spiritual awareness, enabling individuals to lead a balanced life that harmonizes material and spiritual aspects. In the context of complex modern life, religious values serve as a reference point that provides direction in confronting various moral dilemmas. Young people with a strong foundation in religious values tend to be able to exercise self-control and act in accordance with prevailing norms. Rafiq et al. (2025) state that integrating character education into religious instruction can foster individuals who are ethical, responsible, and possess a high level of moral commitment. This demonstrates that religious values function not only at the cognitive level but also shape actual attitudes and behaviors in daily life. Furthermore, religious values also serve as an effective social control mechanism in shielding the younger generation from the negative influences of globalization. In an environment of unlimited information flow, religious values help individuals selectively and wisely filter external influences. These values also foster the development of discipline, empathy, and social responsibility in community life. Thus, religious values make a significant contribution to shaping a younger generation of character, integrity, and the ability to wisely face the challenges of the modern era.

d. As a Collective Identity and for the Sustainability of Social Life

Cultural values play a vital role in shaping the collective identity of the younger generation while ensuring the sustainability of social life. Culture is not merely understood as tradition, but as a system of meaning that shapes the way people think and act within society. Clifford Geertz, as cited in Reyes (2024), states that culture serves as an interpretive framework that gives meaning to social reality. In this context, cultural values serve as a guide that directs individuals in understanding their place within social life. Young people who understand cultural values will have an awareness of their origins, identity, and social role within society. Cultural values also teach principles of togetherness, mutual aid, and

solidarity, which form the foundation for harmonious social relationships. Additionally, cultural values play a role in fostering a sense of social responsibility and care for the surrounding environment. Amid the tide of globalization, cultural values serve as a vital bulwark in preserving the identity of the younger generation so they do not lose their sense of self. An understanding of local culture also encourages the younger generation to better appreciate diversity and strengthen a sense of unity. Thus, cultural values play a significant role in shaping a younger generation with a strong identity, a sense of social responsibility, and the ability to maintain harmony in community life.

e. As an Effort to Integrate Values in a Contextual and Adaptive Manner

In the context of globalization and digitalization, the integration of religious and cultural values has become an increasingly urgent need, as rapid social change has influenced how the younger generation understands, accepts, and embodies values in their daily lives. Values are no longer automatically passed down; instead, they must confront a new reality dominated by digital culture and a massive global flow of information. When values lack a connection to the lived context of the younger generation, they risk losing relevance and meaning, making it difficult for them to be deeply internalized. This situation highlights a gap between normative values and the empirical realities faced by the younger generation, while also revealing that religious and cultural values are in a vulnerable position, at risk of being marginalized by the dominance of more attractive global values. Sipuan et al. (2022) , and Ziraluo et al. (2025) emphasize that rapid social dynamics demand that values retain their cohesive power to avoid a loss of meaning during the identity formation process. Therefore, the urgency of contextual and adaptive value integration lies in efforts to maintain the sustainability, relevance, and strength of values in shaping the identity of the younger generation amidst the complexities of changing times.

f. As an Effort to Instill Values Through the Family, Education, and Society

In the era of globalization and digitalization, reinforcing religious and cultural values has become an urgent necessity to preserve the identity and moral values of the younger generation amid the overwhelming tide of global values. Without a strong foundation of values, the younger generation is vulnerable to identity crisis

and moral decline. Therefore, the internalization of values must involve synergy among the family, education, and society as the three main pillars of character development. The family serves as the foundation for instilling values, education reinforces them through structured learning, and society provides the space for the actualization of values in real life. UNESCO's perspective, as cited by Jože Glavič (2020), emphasizes that values education is the key to sustainable development, aligning with the findings of Vincas Lamanauskas and Vilija Malinauskienė (2024) as well as Jelena Jurdana and Nebojsa Agbaba (2023), who stress the importance of instilling values from an early age. Thus, strengthening religious and cultural values is not merely a strategy but an urgent necessity to shape a generation of character, with a strong sense of identity, and capable of responsibly facing the challenges of the times.

Strengthening religious and cultural values is crucial for shaping the character of the younger generation in the era of globalization and digitalization. Various challenges such as moral degradation, cultural disruption, and identity crises indicate that the younger generation needs a strong foundation of values to guide their lives. Religious and cultural values serve not only as a normative legacy but also as a source of meaning that shapes identity and life direction. Through the integration of contextual and adaptive values, the younger generation can understand and internalize these values in a way that is more relevant to the times. Furthermore, synergy between family, education, and society is key to ensuring the process of value internalization proceeds effectively and sustainably. Collaborative and innovative approaches will strengthen the younger generation's engagement in embodying values in practice. With a strong foundation of values, the younger generation will be better equipped to critically and wisely filter global influences. They will also possess social awareness, moral responsibility, and a commitment to the sustainability of life. Therefore, the reinforcement of religious and cultural values must be a priority in human development. Thus, the younger generation is expected to become agents of change who are principled, have integrity, and contribute to building a harmonious and sustainable civilization.

2.3 Strategies for Instilling Religious and Cultural Values to Foster a Young Generation of Strong Character

The internalization of religious and cultural values is a fundamental process in shaping an individual's character and ethical personality, encompassing not only cognitive aspects but also affective and behavioral dimensions in daily life. This process occurs through ongoing social interactions between individuals and their family, educational, and community environments—which serve as spaces for the formation, reinforcement, and actualization of values. From a character education perspective, the internalization of values is central to the formation of a well-rounded individual morality, as stated by Amin M., M. Nashihin, and M. Nursikin (2024), as well as Abdul et al. (2022), who emphasize that values education is not only knowledge-oriented but also focuses on the formation of moral attitudes and behaviors.

Religious values serve as a universal moral compass that provides guidance for action and decision-making, while cultural values act as a concrete medium for embodying those values in social practice. Therefore, the consistent and sustained internalization of values can strengthen the religious character of the younger generation and help individuals gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of life, thereby serving as a crucial foundation for building a generation with strong character, high ethics, and noble character. In addressing these various challenges, comprehensive and sustainable strategies are required, including the following: First, strengthening values-based digital literacy is a key solution in the modern era. The younger generation must be equipped with the ability to critically evaluate information. Additionally, leveraging digital technology is a crucial strategy for engaging the younger generation, who are deeply immersed in the digital world. Social media and digital platforms can be used as interactive and participatory educational tools to disseminate religious and cultural values. Saripudin et al. (2021) emphasize that the participatory culture in digital media allows the younger generation to act not only as recipients but also as producers of values, thereby making the internalization process deeper and more meaningful

Second, strengthening the role of the family as the foundation for the internalization of values; the family serves as the primary foundation for shaping

the character of the younger generation through the processes of habit formation and setting a good example. In this context, parents not only serve as early educators but also as agents of value internalization, consistently instilling religious and cultural values in daily life. Consistency in values within the family environment is crucial for fostering strong moral and spiritual awareness, ensuring that the younger generation has a solid foundation to navigate the dynamics of globalization and digitalization. Third, the integration of values in contextual formal education. Educational institutions play a strategic role in internalizing religious and cultural values through contextual and innovative learning approaches. Value integration is not limited to instructional materials but also involves experiential learning practices that enable students to understand and internalize values directly. In line with the views of M. K. Schachner et al. (2024), the integration of cultural values in education contributes significantly to the formation of social identity and the moral development of individuals. Furthermore, according to James A. Banks (2015), multicultural education can strengthen identity while fostering an open-minded attitude. This approach enables the younger generation to understand local and global values in a balanced manner.

Fourth: Revitalization and contextualization of local cultural values. Local cultural values need to be revitalized and contextualized to remain relevant in modern life. The integration of religious and cultural values is important because the two complement each other in shaping an individual's character. As stated by Amin M., M. Nashihin, and M. Nursikin (2024), the synergy of religious and cultural values can strengthen the social and spiritual awareness as well as the identity of the younger generation in facing the tide of globalization. Five:: Strengthening the Social Environment through Institutional Synergy The internalization of values cannot be achieved in isolation but requires collaboration among families, schools, and the community as the primary ecosystem for character development. A conducive social environment reinforces the process of incorporating values into daily life. This synergy is key to fostering consistency in values, ensuring that the younger generation receives sustained reinforcement of these values from their various social environments.

Sixth is fostering role modeling and active participation among the younger generation. Role modeling and the active involvement of the younger generation in social practices are key strategies for strengthening the internalization of values. The younger generation needs to be involved in experiential-based social and cultural projects so that they can directly experience the values they have learned. This approach strengthens the internalization of values because it is not only cognitive but also affective and practical. Thus, the younger generation not only understands values but is also able to implement them in real life in a sustainable manner.

The strategy for internalizing religious and cultural values is a strategic and ongoing process that plays a vital role in shaping the character of the younger generation fostering ethical conduct, integrity, and noble character amid the dynamics of globalization and digitalization. Through the strengthening of values-based digital literacy, the role of the family, contextual education integration, the revitalization of local culture, social environment synergy, as well as exemplary leadership and active participation, these values are not only understood cognitively but also internalized and manifested in daily life practices. This comprehensive and adaptive approach is key to maintaining the relevance of religious and cultural values while strengthening the identity of the younger generation, so that they are able to face the challenges of the times without losing their sense of self and continue to contribute to building a harmonious and sustainable social life.

3. Conclusion

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the internalization of religious and cultural values is the primary foundation for shaping a young generation with strong character, ethics, and identity. This process involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects that are realized through education, role modeling, and the cultivation of habits in daily life. Religious values serve as moral and spiritual guidelines, while culture acts as a practical medium that strengthens collective identity. Amid the currents of globalization and digitalization, the younger generation faces challenges such as an identity crisis, moral degradation, and cultural disruption, making the reinforcement of values an urgent necessity. Strategies such as religious moderation, values-based digital literacy, and the strengthening of local culture are crucial in maintaining a balance between modernity and cultural identity. Thus, the internalization of values serves not only to preserve traditions

but also as a strategy for shaping a younger generation that is adaptable, of integrity, and capable of contributing to the development of a sustainable civilization.

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