



The Influence of Social Media on the Development of Adolescent Language and Character from an Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of social media on adolescent language use and character development from an Islamic perspective, addressing a critical gap in existing research that often examines digital communication without integrating linguistic analysis and Islamic ethical frameworks. While prior studies have explored the impact of social media on youth behavior, limited attention has been given to how language practices in digital spaces reflect and shape moral values within an Islamic context. This research aims to analyze patterns of language use among adolescents on social media and to examine their implications for character formation in relation to Islamic principles of ethical communication. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, involving observation of adolescents' online interactions, documentation of digital discourse, and analysis of relevant scholarly literature. The findings indicate that social media promotes the widespread use of informal language forms, such as slang, abbreviations, and code-mixing, which may influence adolescents' formal language competence. More importantly, these linguistic practices are closely linked to shifts in communication ethics, including reduced politeness, impulsive expression, and the pursuit of social validation. From an Islamic perspective, such tendencies may contradict core values such as *akhlaq* (moral conduct), *adab* (proper manners), and responsibility in speech. This study contributes to both linguistic and Islamic studies by offering an integrated analysis of language behavior and moral development in digital contexts. It emphasizes the need for value-based guidance from families, educational institutions, and society to foster ethical and responsible communication among adolescents in the digital era.

Keywords:

adolescent language development; character formation; communication ethics; digital communication; Islamic perspective;

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology in the digital era has significantly transformed various aspects of human life, including patterns of interaction, language use, and character formation. One of the most prominent phenomena is the emergence of social media as a new communicative space where

individuals, particularly adolescents, express themselves, construct identities, and engage in social interaction. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp have evolved beyond entertainment tools to become dominant mediums of communication and cultural production in contemporary society (Wiratama & Hafidz, 2024).

Adolescents, as individuals in a critical phase of identity formation, are highly susceptible to environmental influences, including digital environments. The increasing intensity of social media use has contributed to significant changes in linguistic behavior. The emergence of slang, abbreviations, emojis, and code-mixing reflects what scholars in digital linguistics describe as computer-mediated communication and digital discourse practices, where language becomes more flexible, hybrid, and context-dependent. Recent international studies highlight that digital communication reshapes not only linguistic structures but also communicative norms, often prioritizing speed, creativity, and social engagement over grammatical accuracy and formality. While this reflects the dynamic nature of language evolution, it also raises concerns regarding the decline of formal language competence and the erosion of linguistic standards in educational contexts (Nuraini et al., 2025).

Beyond linguistic changes, social media also plays a crucial role in shaping adolescent character. Exposure to diverse digital content enables adolescents to adopt new values, behaviors, and social norms. However, this exposure is not always positive. Studies in digital sociology and media psychology indicate that social media can encourage behaviors such as reduced communication ethics, cyber incivility, and excessive dependence on social validation through metrics such as likes and comments. These tendencies may influence adolescents' moral development, particularly in terms of empathy, self-control, and responsibility in communication (Abror & Noviani, 2025).

To provide a more comprehensive analysis, this study employs an integrated theoretical framework combining digital linguistics, social learning theory, and Islamic ethical principles. Digital linguistics is used to examine patterns of language use in online communication, while social learning theory explains how adolescents imitate behaviors observed in digital environments. In addition, this study is grounded in Islamic ethical concepts, particularly *akhlaq* (moral conduct) and *adab* (proper manners), as well as principles of communication derived from the Qur'an, such as *qaulan sadidan* (truthful speech), *qaulan ma'rufan* (kind speech), and *qaulan layyinan* (gentle speech). This

integrated framework allows for a more systematic understanding of how language practices in social media relate to moral and character development (Adawiyah & Arifin, 2025).

Despite the growing body of research on social media and adolescents, there remains a significant gap in studies that integrate linguistic analysis with Islamic ethical perspectives. Most existing studies tend to focus either on language change from a sociolinguistic perspective or on moral issues from a general religious standpoint, without providing a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by offering an analysis that connects digital language practices with Islamic moral values.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to examine the influence of social media on the development of adolescents' language and character from an Islamic perspective. This approach is considered appropriate as it allows the researcher to explore in depth the linguistic behavior and character tendencies reflected in adolescents' digital interactions. The focus of the study is directed toward identifying patterns of language use and examining how these patterns relate to character formation within the context of social media use (Lo et al., 2020).

The subjects of this study consisted of 30 adolescents aged between 15 and 18 years who are active users of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp. The participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research objectives. The selection criteria included adolescents who actively use social media for at least 2 to 4 hours per day, frequently engage in online interactions such as posting, commenting, or chatting, and are willing to have their public digital interactions observed for research purposes. This sampling technique ensures that the data obtained accurately represent the linguistic and behavioral patterns of adolescents in digital environments (Van Aken & Berends, 2018).

Data collection was conducted through observation, documentation, and literature review. The researcher observed adolescents' communication activities on social media, focusing on language forms, communication styles, and interaction patterns. In addition, documentation was carried out by collecting data in the form of screenshots or records of

digital interactions, including captions, comments, chats, and posts. A total of 120 data units were selected based on their relevance to the research focus. To support and strengthen the analysis, the researcher also reviewed various scientific sources related to digital linguistics, adolescent development, and Islamic ethical values.

The data collected were then filtered using specific criteria to ensure their relevance and quality. The selected data had to contain clear examples of language use, such as slang, abbreviations, code-mixing, or other informal expressions, and reflect communication behavior in terms of politeness, emotional tone, and ethical aspects. Only authentic adolescent interactions in digital spaces were included, while irrelevant, ambiguous, or incomplete data were excluded from the analysis.

In this study, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, functioning both as an observer and a data analyst. Supporting instruments include digital devices used to access social media platforms and tools for documenting and organizing data. The data were analyzed qualitatively through several stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. These stages were conducted systematically to identify patterns, categorize findings, and interpret meanings in relation to digital linguistics and Islamic ethical principles (Rahman, 2016).

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data, this study applies source triangulation by comparing findings obtained from observations, documentation, and relevant literature. In addition, peer discussion was conducted to reduce potential bias in data interpretation. Through these procedures, the study aims to produce findings that are credible, consistent, and capable of providing a comprehensive understanding of the influence of social media on adolescent language and character development within an Islamic framework.

FINDINGS

The results of this study are presented through a combination of tabular data and analytical descriptions to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media shapes adolescents' language use and character formation. Unlike previous studies that primarily describe surface-level linguistic changes, this study identifies deeper patterns linking digital language practices with shifts in communication ethics and moral orientation.

The Influence of Social Media on Adolescent Language Development

The findings indicate that social media does not merely introduce new vocabulary, but fundamentally reshapes the function and intention of language use among adolescents. As presented in Table 1, four major linguistic transformations were identified.

Table 1. Forms of Language Development in Adolescents due to Social Media

No	Language Aspects	Key Findings
1	Vocabulary	Emergence of slang and context-specific expressions
2	Language Structure	Compression of sentences through abbreviations and symbols
3	Language Mixing	Strategic code-mixing with English to signal identity
4	Communication Style	Shift toward immediacy, emotional expression, and brevity

Beyond these surface changes, a key finding of this study is that adolescents use language on social media as a tool of identity performance rather than mere communication. Slang and code-mixing are not only practical adaptations but also function as markers of group belonging, modernity, and digital literacy. This indicates a shift from language as a formal system to language as a social-symbolic resource.

However, this transformation also introduces a paradox. While adolescents become more expressive and adaptive in informal contexts, their ability to switch to formal and structured language tends to weaken. This suggests that the issue is not simply “language degradation,” but rather a functional imbalance between informal digital competence and formal linguistic proficiency, which has not been sufficiently highlighted in previous studies (Adawiyah & Arifin, 2025).

The Influence of Social Media on Adolescent Character

The findings further reveal that social media influences adolescent character in a more complex way than a simple positive–negative dichotomy. As summarized in Table 2, the impact operates through behavioral reinforcement mechanisms shaped by digital interaction systems.

Table 2. The Influence of Social Media on Adolescent Character

No	Character Aspects	Positive Impact	Negative Impact
1	Social	Expansion of social networks	Decreased depth of face-to-face relations
2	Moral	Access to educational and religious content	Normalization of inappropriate behavior
3	Emotional	Increased self-expression	Dependency on social validation

4	Communication Ethics	Greater confidence in expressing opinions	Decline in politeness and restraint
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A significant insight from this study is that adolescent behavior on social media is strongly influenced by what can be termed a “digital reward system.” Features such as likes, comments, and shares act as immediate feedback mechanisms that reinforce certain behaviors. As a result, adolescents tend to prioritize content that gains attention rather than content that reflects ethical or moral considerations.

This finding suggests that character development in the digital era is no longer shaped solely by family or educational institutions, but also by algorithm-driven interaction patterns. Consequently, moral challenges faced by adolescents are structurally embedded in the design of social media platforms, not merely in individual behavior (Al-Ansi et al., 2023).

Analysis from an Islamic Perspective

From an Islamic perspective, the findings of this study reveal a critical tension between evolving digital communication practices and established ethical principles. The tendency toward brevity, impulsivity, and emotional expression in online language often conflicts with Islamic communication values such as *qaulan sadidan* (truthful speech), *qaulan ma'rufan* (kind speech), and *qaulan layyinan* (gentle speech).

A novel contribution of this study lies in identifying that the main challenge is not the presence of new linguistic forms, but the shift in communicative intention and ethical awareness. In many observed interactions, the use of language is driven more by the pursuit of attention and recognition than by sincerity (*ikhlas*) or responsibility (*amanah*) in speech. This reflects a transformation in the moral orientation of communication, where external validation begins to outweigh internal ethical control.

However, the study also finds that social media holds significant potential as a medium for moral development and da'wah. Adolescents who are exposed to positive and value-driven content demonstrate more reflective and ethical communication patterns. This indicates that digital platforms are not inherently problematic; rather, their impact depends on the value framework guiding their use.

Thus, this study offers a new perspective by positioning social media not only as a space of linguistic change but also as a contested moral arena, where Islamic values can

either be weakened or strengthened depending on how adolescents engage with digital communication practices.

DISCUSSION

This study extends existing research on social media and adolescents by offering an integrated interpretation of linguistic behavior and character development within digital environments. Rather than viewing language change merely as a decline in formal standards, the findings suggest that adolescents are actively negotiating between different communicative norms. This aligns with perspectives in digital linguistics which argue that language in online spaces functions as a flexible and context-dependent system shaped by immediacy, audience, and platform features. In this sense, the use of slang, abbreviations, and code-mixing should be understood not only as simplification, but as a form of adaptive communicative competence in digital contexts (Wahda et al., 2026).

However, this adaptive competence also introduces a structural tension. Drawing on social learning theory, adolescents tend to imitate linguistic and behavioral patterns that are most visible and socially rewarded in digital spaces. The prominence of informal and attention-driven communication creates an environment where expressive speed and emotional impact are prioritized over reflection and linguistic accuracy. This helps explain why adolescents may struggle to transfer their digital communication skills into formal or academic settings. Therefore, the issue is not solely linguistic degradation, but a contextual imbalance in language mastery across different domains (Abror & Noviani, 2025).

In terms of character development, the findings can be interpreted through the lens of behavioral reinforcement in digital ecosystems. Social media platforms operate through feedback mechanisms such as likes, comments, and shares, which function as external validators of behavior. As a result, adolescents are more likely to repeat actions that generate visibility and engagement, even when such actions may conflict with ethical norms. This indicates that character formation in the digital era is increasingly influenced by algorithmic and interactional structures, rather than purely by traditional socialization agents such as family and school.

From an Islamic perspective, this shift raises important ethical considerations. Islamic teachings emphasize intentionality (*niyyah*), responsibility (*amanah*), and moral

conduct (*akhlaq*) in all forms of communication. The tendency to prioritize visibility and social validation over sincerity reflects a potential misalignment between digital practices and Islamic ethical principles. However, it is important to note that Islam does not reject technological development; rather, it provides a moral framework to guide its use. In this context, the challenge lies in integrating Islamic values into digital behavior, ensuring that communication remains truthful, respectful, and purposeful even within fast-paced online interactions.

This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that social media should not be understood solely as a source of negative influence, but as a transformative space where linguistic innovation and moral negotiation occur simultaneously. The findings highlight the need for a balanced approach that recognizes adolescents' digital competencies while also strengthening their ethical awareness. Educational strategies, therefore, should not focus only on restricting social media use, but on developing critical digital literacy grounded in cultural and religious values.

1. Adolescent Language Transformation in the Digital Era

The transformation of adolescent language in the digital era should be understood not merely as a surface-level linguistic shift, but as a reflection of deeper changes in communicative practices shaped by digital environments. In contrast to traditional views that frame such changes as a decline in language standards, this study supports the perspective of digital linguistics which views online language as adaptive, functional, and context-sensitive. Social media environments encourage forms of communication that prioritize immediacy, brevity, and audience engagement, thereby reshaping how adolescents construct meaning and express identity (Rianto & Juliarta, 2024).

From this perspective, the use of slang, abbreviations, emojis, and code-mixing should not be interpreted solely as linguistic simplification, but rather as a form of symbolic and social performance. Adolescents utilize these linguistic resources to signal group belonging, negotiate identity, and maintain social relevance within fast-moving digital interactions. This aligns with contemporary studies in digital communication which emphasize that language in online spaces extends beyond verbal expression to include multimodal and affective dimensions, such as visual symbols and emotional cues (Davydova, 2025).

However, this adaptive linguistic competence also produces a structural challenge, particularly in the ability of adolescents to navigate between informal and formal communicative contexts. The findings suggest that frequent exposure to informal digital language may contribute to a reduced sensitivity toward formal linguistic norms. Rather than indicating a permanent decline in language ability, this condition reflects a domain-specific imbalance, where adolescents demonstrate high proficiency in digital communication but limited flexibility in transitioning to formal or academic discourse (Hasjim et al., 2024).

In addition, the ethical dimension of language use becomes increasingly significant in digital contexts. The relative anonymity and reduced social cues in online communication often lower the threshold for expressing negative or impolite language. This supports the argument that digital environments can weaken normative constraints on communication, leading to the normalization of sarcasm, offensive expressions, or emotionally reactive speech (Chonmurunova & Kulpoldieva, 2025). In this regard, language is not only a cognitive skill but also a reflection of moral awareness and self-regulation.

From an Islamic perspective, this transformation highlights the importance of maintaining ethical principles in all forms of communication, including digital interactions. Islamic teachings emphasize that language is inherently tied to moral accountability, where values such as truthfulness, kindness, and respect must guide every utterance. Therefore, the challenge is not to resist linguistic change, but to ensure that evolving language practices remain aligned with ethical and spiritual values (Sulistiyarini & Prasetyo, 2024).

In summary, adolescent language transformation in the digital era should be positioned as a dynamic interplay between technological affordances, social identity construction, and ethical considerations. This study contributes by reframing the issue from a deficit-oriented view into a more balanced understanding that recognizes both the adaptive potential and the ethical risks of digital language use.

2. Social Media as a Space for Character Building

Social media should be understood not merely as a communication tool, but as a dynamic socialization environment that actively shapes adolescent character. In contrast

to traditional perspectives that position family and school as primary agents of socialization, this study highlights the growing dominance of digital platforms in influencing values, attitudes, and behavioral norms. Through continuous exposure and interaction, adolescents internalize patterns of behavior that are repeatedly encountered in digital spaces, reinforcing the argument that social media operates as an alternative moral and cultural framework (Hauliza & Satria, 2025).

From the perspective of social learning theory, character formation in digital environments occurs through processes of observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Adolescents are more likely to adopt behaviors that receive high visibility and positive feedback, such as approval in the form of likes, comments, or shares. This indicates that behavior in social media is not only socially constructed but also algorithmically reinforced, where platform structures play a role in amplifying certain values over others. As a result, character development is increasingly influenced by external validation mechanisms rather than internal moral reflection.

At the same time, social media provides opportunities for positive character development, particularly in fostering creativity, self-expression, and global awareness. Adolescents are able to construct identities, share ideas, and engage with diverse perspectives, which can contribute to the development of confidence and adaptability. However, these potentials are highly dependent on the type of content consumed and the level of critical awareness possessed by users (Hidayat et al., 2024).

The main issue, therefore, lies not in the presence of social media itself, but in the imbalance between exposure and ethical control. Without sufficient guidance, adolescents may become more vulnerable to negative influences, such as the normalization of inappropriate behavior, emotional dependency on social recognition, and decreased empathy in digital interactions. The absence of direct social cues and the presence of anonymity further reduce accountability, allowing behaviors that may not align with established moral norms to become more acceptable (Salarian & Hosseini, 2025; Song, 2025).

From an Islamic perspective, this condition underscores the importance of reinforcing *akhlaq* (moral conduct) as the foundation of all interactions, including those in digital spaces. Islamic teachings emphasize that behavior is not determined solely by external circumstances, but by internal moral awareness and accountability before God.

Therefore, the increasing influence of social media must be balanced with the strengthening of values such as honesty, responsibility, self-control, and respect for others. In this context, social media can be reoriented from a value-neutral platform into a value-driven space, where interactions reflect ethical and spiritual principles (Candiasa et al., 2021).

Ultimately, this study suggests that character formation in the digital era is the result of an ongoing negotiation between technological structures, social influences, and moral frameworks. Rather than positioning adolescents as passive recipients of digital influence, it is important to recognize their active role in interpreting and responding to digital content. This perspective shifts the focus from controlling technology to empowering ethical agency, where adolescents are equipped to navigate social media in a reflective and responsible manner.

3. Challenges of Communication Ethics in an Islamic Perspective

The challenges of communication ethics in digital environments should not be understood merely as individual behavioral issues, but as a consequence of structural changes in the nature of communication itself. Social media platforms create conditions characterized by speed, openness, and reduced social cues, which collectively reshape how individuals evaluate and regulate their speech. In such environments, communication often becomes more impulsive and reactive, reducing the space for reflection and ethical consideration (Abdulrohimi E-sor et al., 2025).

From a theoretical standpoint, this phenomenon can be linked to the concept of online disinhibition, where individuals tend to express themselves more freely in digital spaces due to perceived anonymity and psychological distance. This condition weakens conventional social controls and increases the likelihood of ethical deviations, including the spread of unverified information, emotionally driven responses, and the use of language that may harm others. Thus, ethical challenges in digital communication are not solely rooted in moral decline, but also in the transformation of interactional contexts that shape user behavior.

Within an Islamic framework, communication is not only a social act but also a moral and spiritual responsibility. The principles of *akhlaq* (moral conduct), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *niyyah* (intention) provide a comprehensive ethical foundation

that governs both spoken and written expressions. This perspective emphasizes that every form of communication carries accountability, not only in social terms but also in relation to divine accountability. Therefore, the ethical issues emerging in digital communication can be interpreted as a misalignment between technological practices and internalized moral values (Munawaroh & Marlina, 2025).

A key challenge identified in this study is the diminishing role of self-regulation in online interactions. The immediacy of social media encourages spontaneous responses, often bypassing critical evaluation and ethical judgment. In addition, the normalization of anonymous or pseudonymous identities further reduces personal accountability, enabling behaviors that may not occur in face-to-face contexts. This reinforces the argument that ethical awareness must be consciously developed, as it is no longer automatically regulated by social norms in digital environments (Farid et al., 2024).

In this context, strengthening communication ethics requires a shift from external control toward internal moral regulation. From an Islamic perspective, this involves cultivating awareness that every digital interaction is subject to moral evaluation, thereby encouraging individuals to align their communication practices with values of truthfulness, respect, and responsibility. Rather than restricting expression, this approach emphasizes the development of ethical consciousness that enables adolescents to navigate digital spaces in a reflective and principled manner.

Overall, this study highlights that the ethical challenges of communication in the digital era lie in the tension between technological affordances and moral responsibility. Addressing these challenges requires not only technical or regulatory solutions, but also a value-based approach that integrates ethical principles into everyday digital practices.

4. Optimizing the Role of the Environment in Guiding Adolescents

The role of the environment in adolescent development within the digital era should be understood as a coordinated system of socialization, rather than as separate influences from family, school, and society. This study suggests that the effectiveness of guidance in digital behavior is determined not only by the presence of these environments, but by the consistency of values transmitted across them. In rapidly evolving digital contexts, adolescents require stable reference points to interpret information, regulate behavior, and construct meaning from their online experiences (Baker et al., 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, ecological approaches to human development emphasize that behavior is shaped through the interaction of multiple environmental layers. In this regard, the family plays a foundational role in establishing early moral awareness and behavioral norms. However, its influence is increasingly mediated by digital exposure, which may either reinforce or contradict the values introduced at home. Therefore, the role of parents shifts from mere supervision to active mediation, where guidance involves dialogue, critical reflection, and modeling of responsible digital behavior (Andrews et al., 2021).

Educational institutions, on the other hand, function as formal spaces for the institutionalization of values and competencies. Beyond cognitive instruction, schools are expected to integrate ethical reasoning and digital literacy into their learning processes. This includes fostering students' ability to critically evaluate online content, communicate responsibly, and understand the broader consequences of digital interactions. In this context, educators act not only as knowledge transmitters but also as facilitators of ethical and reflective engagement in digital environments (Kumari & Biswas, 2023).

At the societal level, norms and cultural expectations continue to shape adolescent behavior, although their influence is increasingly challenged by globalized digital content. This creates a tension between local value systems and transnational digital cultures, requiring a more adaptive and responsive approach to social guidance. The study indicates that without alignment between these environmental layers, adolescents may experience confusion in navigating competing value systems. Therefore, strengthening social cohesion and shared norms becomes essential in supporting consistent character development (Singh et al., 2020).

From an Islamic perspective, the concept of environment (*bi'ah*) is closely linked to moral formation, emphasizing that individuals are influenced by the social contexts in which they interact. A supportive environment is one that not only promotes positive behavior but also actively prevents moral deviation. In the digital era, this concept extends beyond physical spaces to include virtual environments, highlighting the need to cultivate value-based digital communities that reinforce ethical conduct.

In summary, optimizing the role of the environment requires a shift from fragmented efforts to integrated and value-consistent strategies. Rather than positioning adolescents as passive recipients of guidance, this approach emphasizes their active

engagement in interpreting and applying values across contexts. Such integration is essential to ensure that social media becomes not a source of conflict in value formation, but a space that supports holistic adolescent development.

5. Strategies for Strengthening Digital Literacy Based on Islamic Values

The strengthening of digital literacy in the context of adolescent development should not be limited to technical competencies, but must be understood as an integration of cognitive, critical, and ethical capacities. This study argues that digital literacy becomes meaningful only when it is grounded in a value system that guides how information is interpreted, evaluated, and communicated. In this regard, Islamic values provide a normative framework that complements contemporary models of digital literacy by emphasizing responsibility, intentionality, and moral awareness in digital engagement (Baker et al., 2025).

Rather than positioning adolescents as passive recipients of guidance, effective digital literacy strategies should focus on developing reflective agency, where individuals are to critically assess both content and their own communicative behavior. This includes the ability to question the credibility of information, understand the social consequences of digital expression, and regulate emotional responses in online interactions. The Islamic principle of *tabayyun* (verification) becomes particularly relevant in this context, as it promotes critical evaluation and discourages the unreflective dissemination of information (Meredith & Silvers, 2024).

In addition, the integration of ethical literacy into formal and informal education is essential. Educational institutions are expected to move beyond instrumental uses of technology by embedding discussions of digital ethics, communication responsibility, and value-based decision-making within the curriculum. At the same time, the family environment plays a crucial role in reinforcing these values through everyday practices and modeling. This dual approach ensures that digital literacy is not only taught conceptually but also practiced consistently across contexts (Kumari & Biswas, 2023; Huoponen, 2024).

A key insight from this study is that digital literacy must also address the affective dimension of digital interaction, particularly adolescents' tendency to seek social validation. Without adequate guidance, digital participation may be driven more by the

pursuit of recognition than by meaningful engagement. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy involves cultivating self-awareness and emotional regulation, enabling adolescents to engage in social media in ways that are both constructive and ethically grounded.

From an Islamic perspective, digital literacy can be further conceptualized as part of a broader process of moral development, where communication is viewed as an act with ethical and spiritual implications. This perspective redefines social media not as a neutral platform, but as a space where values are continuously negotiated and practiced. Consequently, the use of social media for positive purposes such as knowledge sharing, community building, and da'wah can be seen as an extension of ethical responsibility in the digital sphere (Xu, 2024).

In conclusion, strategies for strengthening digital literacy require a holistic and integrative approach that combines technical skills, critical thinking, and moral values. The synergy between family, educational institutions, and society is essential in fostering a consistent value framework that supports adolescents in navigating digital environments. By emphasizing both competence and character, digital literacy can function as a transformative tool that enables adolescents to engage with social media in a responsible, reflective, and ethically grounded manner.

Research Implications

This study provides several important implications for theoretical development, educational practice, and future research in the context of adolescent development in the digital era. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the integration of digital linguistics, social learning theory, and Islamic ethical frameworks. It demonstrates that language use in social media cannot be fully understood without considering its moral and cultural dimensions. By positioning digital communication as both a linguistic and ethical phenomenon, this study expands existing approaches that often treat these aspects separately. This integrated perspective opens new directions for interdisciplinary research, particularly in examining how digital environments reshape not only communication patterns but also value systems (Munigar et al., 2024).

In terms of practical implications, the findings highlight the need to redefine digital literacy as a value-based competence, rather than merely a technical skill. Educational

institutions are encouraged to incorporate digital communication ethics into their curricula, emphasizing not only how to use technology but also how to communicate responsibly and ethically. At the same time, families play a crucial role in reinforcing these values through consistent guidance and example in everyday digital interactions. This indicates that effective character development in the digital era requires collaboration between formal education and informal social environments (Rianto & Juliarta, 2024).

Furthermore, this study has implications for policymakers and educators in designing interventions that address the challenges of adolescent behavior in digital spaces. Rather than focusing solely on restriction or control, policies should aim to develop adolescents' critical awareness, self-regulation, and ethical responsibility. Programs that integrate religious or moral values such as Islamic principles of communication can serve as a foundation for building responsible digital citizenship (Al-Ansi et al., 2023).

From a social perspective, this study emphasizes the importance of creating value-oriented digital environments. Communities and digital platforms are encouraged to promote positive content, constructive interaction, and ethical engagement. This approach shifts the focus from viewing social media as a threat to recognizing its potential as a space for personal development, learning, and moral growth (Wahda et al., 2026).

Finally, for future research, this study suggests the need for more diverse methodological approaches, such as quantitative analysis to measure the extent of linguistic and behavioral changes, or experimental studies to evaluate the effectiveness of value-based digital literacy programs. Comparative studies across cultural or religious contexts may also provide a broader understanding of how different value systems interact with digital communication practices.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media influences adolescent language use and character development in ways that are context-dependent rather than uniformly positive or negative. The findings indicate that adolescents demonstrate strong adaptability in digital communication, particularly through the use of informal language forms such as slang, abbreviations, and code-mixing. However, this adaptability is accompanied by a

functional imbalance, where competence in informal digital contexts is not always matched by proficiency in formal language use.

In terms of character development, the study finds that adolescent behavior in digital spaces is shaped not only by individual choices but also by interactional and platform-driven dynamics, such as the pursuit of visibility and social feedback. This suggests that character formation in the digital era is increasingly influenced by external reinforcement mechanisms, which may challenge the development of internal ethical awareness.

From an Islamic perspective, these findings highlight a gap between evolving digital communication practices and established ethical principles, particularly in relation to responsibility, self-control, and sincerity in communication. Rather than rejecting technological change, the study emphasizes the importance of aligning digital behavior with ethical values as a means of maintaining moral consistency in contemporary contexts.

Overall, this study contributes by demonstrating that social media should be understood as a negotiated space of linguistic adaptation and moral formation, rather than a unidirectional influence. Based on these findings, it is essential to develop approaches that strengthen adolescents' ability to balance communicative flexibility with ethical responsibility, particularly through value-based digital literacy and consistent guidance across social environments.

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