

Integration of *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā* into Character Education for Generations Z and Alpha in the Digital Era

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the relevance of Buddhist value-based character education to the character development of Generations Z and Alpha in the digital era. The study employed a qualitative design and a literature review method. The data came from the *Tipiṭaka*, particularly the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, as well as relevant books and journal articles. The study applied thematic content analysis to identify, classify, and synthesize the principles of Buddhist character education. The results show that *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* form a complementary structure of character development. *Sīla* provides the foundation for digital ethics by regulating speech, conduct, and social responsibility. *Samādhi* strengthens the regulation of attention, emotions, and digital device use, whereas *paññā* develops ethical literacy by enabling individuals to assess the accuracy of information, risks, digital footprints, and moral consequences. The internalization of these three values requires collaboration among families, formal schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools through value introduction, role modeling, habituation, and reflection. The findings emphasize the need for a Buddhist character education model that responds to the realities of digital life. The originality of this study lies in its integration of the three Buddhist trainings, the relational ethics of the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, and collaboration among three educational environments as a framework for developing the character of digital generations.

Keywords: Buddhist character education; Generation Z; Generation Alpha; three Buddhist trainings; digital ethics.

ARTICLE INFO

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Article History:

Received: 24-01-2026
Revised: 19-03-2026
Accepted: 25-05-2026
Published: 30-06-2026

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How to Cite (APA Style):

Nimitta, H.; Mujiyanto, M.;
and Partono, P. (2026).
Integration of *Sīla*,
Samādhi, and *Paññā* into
Character Education for
Generations Z and Alpha
in the Digital Era.
*Subhasita: Journal of
Buddhist and Religious
Studies*, 4(1), 101-122.
DOI: 10.53417/jsb.192

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has transformed how young people acquire knowledge, communicate, and build social relationships. Digital devices and the internet provide rapid access to information, expand learning spaces, and improve technological competence (Le, 2022). However, technology use without adequate self-control can create ethical problems in young people's lives. These problems appear in the use of impolite language, limited respect for others, impulsive behavior, cyberbullying, and declining responsibility in social interactions (Loeung & Phal, 2025). This condition confirms that education should not only

produce technologically competent generations but also develop individuals who can use technology ethically and responsibly.

This issue has become increasingly important because Generations Z and Alpha have grown up in environments that are highly connected to the internet. A survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association reported that Indonesia had 221.56 million internet users in 2024, representing 79.5% of the total population. Generation Z constituted the largest group of internet users, accounting for 34.40%, while the generation following Generation Z accounted for 9.17% of all internet users. The survey involved 8,720 respondents from 38 provinces and employed a multistage random sampling technique (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia [APJII]) (APJII, 2024). These data demonstrate that digital spaces have become a dominant environment in the formation of young people's knowledge, behavior, identity, and social relationships.

The intensity of internet use does not always correspond with children's preparedness to address digital risks. A UNICEF baseline study on children's online knowledge and practices in Indonesia found that most children used the internet daily, primarily for social interaction and entertainment. However, only 37.5% of children had received information about how to remain safe while using the internet. In addition, 42% of children had experienced discomfort or fear because of online experiences, while 50.3% had encountered sexual images through social media (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF]) (UNICEF, 2023). These findings reveal a gap between children's ability to access technology and their ability to use it safely, consciously, and ethically.

The use of digital devices also relates to the quality of interaction and discipline in educational settings. PISA 2022 data showed that 25% of students in Indonesia experienced concentration problems because of digital device use during lessons, while 27% reported that other students' use of digital devices disrupted their learning. In addition, 24% of students reported that they did not listen to their teachers during most or all mathematics lessons. Relational problems also remained evident because 25% of female students and 30% of male students in Indonesia experienced bullying at least several times each month (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]) (OCED, 2023). These data indicate that technological competence does not always develop alongside self-control, discipline, respect, and concern for others.

These data do not directly prove that digital device use causes moral decline among Generations Z and Alpha. Complex interactions among families, schools, peers, social environments, popular culture, and digital media shape young people's behavior. However, the data indicate that education that emphasizes only academic and digital competence remains insufficient to develop the moral capacities required in digital environments (Dong, 2021). Young people need character education that extends beyond the verbal introduction of values and cultivates awareness, self-control, responsibility, wisdom, and social concern. Character education should help students assess the consequences of their thoughts, speech, and actions, including actions performed through digital media.

In this context, Buddhist value-based character education provides a relevant framework for developing the character of digital generations. Buddhist teachings do not separate moral conduct from mental cultivation and the development of

wisdom. Buddhist character education can draw on three forms of training: morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). *Sīla* guides individuals to avoid actions that harm themselves and others. *Samādhi* trains attention, calmness, and control over emerging impulses. Meanwhile, *paññā* develops the ability to understand the consequences of actions and make wise decisions (Bodhi, 2008). These three elements can balance technological competence with moral maturity.

The *Sigālovāda Sutta* also demonstrates the relevance of Buddhist character education by explaining reciprocal responsibilities in social life. The *sutta* places parents, children, teachers, students, friends, spouses, workers, and religious leaders within relationships based on mutual protection and responsibility. Parents must prevent their children from engaging in harmful conduct, guide them toward goodness, and equip them with practical skills. Teachers must provide proper education, ensure students' understanding, and offer protection. In return, students must demonstrate diligence, attention, and respect throughout the learning process (*Dīgha Nikāya* 31). These principles show that character does not develop through individual advice alone. Instead, consistent social relationships among families, schools, and religious communities shape character formation.

Research on Buddhist character and values has developed along at least three major trends. The first trend places Buddhist character within philosophical and virtue-ethical frameworks. MacKenzie (2017) explains that Buddhist ethics directs individuals to overcome greed, hatred, and ignorance by cultivating mental qualities that support happiness and freedom. Wright (2009) describes character formation through the six perfections: generosity, morality, patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom. Øvreliid (2008) presents moral character development as a challenge to professional approaches that place excessive emphasis on formal rules. Hong (2022) also identifies ethical values in Buddhist philosophy as foundations for individual and social life. These studies successfully explain the normative foundations of Buddhist character, but they do not specifically connect those foundations to the behavior and interactions of Generations Z and Alpha in digital environments.

The second trend examines the application of Buddhist teachings to moral education and personality development. Le (2022) analyzes the contribution of Buddhist education to the development of adolescents' moral behavior. Jadhav and Shaikh (2026) demonstrate that *Jātaka* stories can support moral reasoning, empathy, self-control, and prosocial behavior through models of virtuous conduct. Fu et al. (2026) develop the Ten Good Deeds as an educational approach that promotes ethical development, family relationships, learning culture, and students' moral integrity. These studies show that educators can translate Buddhist values into narratives, habituation, and educational activities. However, each study still focuses on a specific element, such as adolescent behavior, moral stories, or the Ten Good Deeds. These studies have not integrated *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* into a character education framework that addresses problems of digital ethics.

The third trend situates Buddhist education within relationships among families, schools, religious institutions, and cultural environments. Gunawan (2022) finds that parenting styles and school environments play positive roles in the development of students' Buddhist character. Loeung and Phal (2025) show that monastic primary schools in Cambodia integrate *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* into moral

development, concentration, wisdom, and cultural preservation. Meanwhile, Thanissaro's (2012) mapping of Buddhist values, Truong's (2014) discussion of Asian values from a Buddhist perspective, and Bobyрева and Dmitrieva's (2022) comparison of religious value orientations demonstrate that moral formation always relates to social and cultural contexts. These studies extend character education from the individual domain to the institutional domain. Nevertheless, research on an integrated relationship among families, formal schools, Buddhist Sunday Schools, and digital environments remains limited.

These three trends indicate that research on Buddhist character education remains fragmented. Philosophical studies explain the structure of virtue and the goals of moral transformation, but they do not translate these concepts into issues of digital ethics. Pedagogical studies demonstrate the benefits of Buddhist teachings, narratives, and practices, but they do not construct a framework that connects behavioral control, attention management, and decision-making. Institutional studies emphasize the roles of families and schools, but they do not position Buddhist Sunday Schools as strategic partners in developing the character of digital generations. Research that specifically integrates *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* with the social responsibilities described in the *Sigālovāda Sutta* to develop the character of Generations Z and Alpha remains limited.

Based on this research gap, this study analyzes the relevance of Buddhist values to strengthening the character of Generations Z and Alpha in the digital era. Specifically, this study examines the role of *sīla* in shaping ethical conduct, the role of *samādhi* in strengthening attention and self-control, and the role of *paññā* in guiding the wise use of technology. This study also explains how families, formal schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools internalize responsibility, discipline, respect, empathy, and social concern from an early age.

This study argues that Buddhist character education must operate at three levels. At the intrapersonal level, *samādhi* and *paññā* develop attention, emotional control, self-awareness, and the ability to consider the consequences of actions. At the interpersonal level, *sīla* guides individuals to use respectful language, act nonviolently, practice honesty, accept responsibility, and respect others, including in digital communication. At the institutional level, the principle of reciprocal relationships in the *Sigālovāda Sutta* directs families, schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools to build consistent educational environments. The originality of this study lies in its integration of the three Buddhist trainings, the relational ethics of the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, and three educational environments as a framework for strengthening the character of Generations Z and Alpha. This framework expands Buddhist character education beyond doctrinal instruction toward the development of moral competencies that respond to the realities of digital life.

METHOD

This study analyzes Buddhist character education values contained in the *Tipiṭaka*, particularly the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, and their relevance to the character development of Generations Z and Alpha in the digital era. The analysis focuses on morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*), social responsibility, self-control, discipline, empathy, and the ethical use of technology. This study does not

attempt to validate the doctrinal truth of Buddhism. Instead, it examines ethical and pedagogical meanings that educators can apply to character education.

This study employed a qualitative design and a literature review method. The study selected a qualitative design because religious texts, ethical concepts, and educational ideas require contextual and in-depth interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The literature review enabled the researchers to identify, compare, and synthesize ideas from various sources to construct a conceptual framework that aligned with the research objectives (Snyder, 2019). The researchers also used document analysis to identify meanings, patterns, and relationships among concepts in written sources (Bowen, 2009).

The research data consisted of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included the *Sigālovāda Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* and other texts in the *Tipiṭaka* that discuss *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. The secondary sources included academic books, national and international journal articles, and previous studies on Buddhist education, character education, virtue ethics, adolescent moral behavior, parenting, school environments, and digital ethics. The researchers selected the sources according to thematic relevance, publisher credibility, academic quality, and relevance to Generations Z and Alpha.

The researchers collected the data by searching, selecting, reading, recording, and classifying relevant literature. The literature search used the keywords Buddhist character education, Buddhist ethics, *Sigālovāda Sutta*, *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, Generation Z, Generation Alpha, character education, and digital ethics. The researchers first identified character education principles in the primary sources. They then compared these principles with findings from previous studies on the moral development of young people. Finally, they classified the data into themes of self-control, ethical conduct, digital wisdom, social responsibility, and the role of educational environments.

The researchers analyzed the data through thematic content analysis. Content analysis allowed them to interpret textual meanings systematically according to categories that reflected the research focus (Krippendorff, 2018). The analytical process included close reading, coding key concepts, organizing codes into themes, comparing findings across sources, and constructing conceptual interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researchers organized the findings into three dimensions: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional. The intrapersonal dimension included attention, self-control, and wisdom. The interpersonal dimension included respectful communication, empathy, honesty, and social responsibility. The institutional dimension included the roles of families, formal schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools. The researchers strengthened the credibility of their interpretations by comparing primary texts, academic literature, and findings from previous studies.

RESULT

1. *Sīla, Samādhi, and Paññā as the Structure of Buddhist Character Education*

Sīla refers to moral discipline that guides individuals in regulating their speech, actions, and social relationships so that they do not harm themselves or others. *Samādhi* refers to the cultivation of mental concentration, which develops

attention, calmness, emotional stability, and the ability to control impulses. Meanwhile, *paññā* refers to wisdom that enables individuals to understand the motives, consequences, and moral significance of every decision. In Buddhist character education, these three elements do not operate separately. Instead, they form a complementary structure of moral development. *Sīla* without *samādhi* may produce formal compliance that easily weakens when individuals face pressure or temptation, whereas *samādhi* without *sīla* may lose its ethical and social orientation. Individuals also cannot reduce *paññā* to intellectual competence unless they express it through responsible speech and conduct. The integration of these three elements frames character education as a process that connects ethical behavior, emotional maturity, and reflective thinking. This structure corresponds with the classification of the Noble Eightfold Path into moral training, mental discipline, and wisdom, as well as with the aims of Buddhist education, which direct knowledge toward character transformation (Bodhi, 2008; Wright, 2009). For Generations Z and Alpha, this structure provides a foundation for balancing digital competence, self-control, and social responsibility (Le, 2022).

The *Sigālovāda Sutta* gives this foundation of character education a concrete social form. When explaining parents' responsibilities toward their children, the Buddha states that "they should restrain them from wrongdoing, encourage them to do good, [and] teach them a profession" (*Dīgha Nikāya* 31). This statement shows that moral education does not merely require children to obey rules. It also requires adults to create environments that prevent misconduct, cultivate virtue, and develop children's abilities. Efforts to prevent children from engaging in harmful behavior reflect the protective function of *sīla*, while encouragement to perform good actions confirms that moral development requires active habituation. Educators should not direct skills training only toward technical competence. They should also cultivate *samādhi* as the ability to regulate attention and *paññā* as the ability to use knowledge wisely. Therefore, the character development of Generations Z and Alpha constitutes a relational responsibility that simultaneously requires role modeling, guidance, and the development of moral competence.

Sīla occupies the foundational level of Buddhist character education because it defines the moral boundaries between actions that individuals should perform and actions that they should avoid. However, *sīla* does not function merely as an external prohibition. It also trains the will to regulate bodily conduct, speech, and thought. The dimension of *varitta-sīla* prevents individuals from killing, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, lying, and performing actions that weaken awareness, whereas *caritta-sīla* directs individuals to actively cultivate honesty, loving-kindness, respect, discipline, and responsibility. These two dimensions show that Buddhist morality does not end with "refraining from wrongdoing." It also requires active participation in creating goodness for others. *Hiri* and *ottappa* strengthen this self-restraint by cultivating moral shame toward wrongdoing and awareness of the social consequences of harmful conduct. In the context of Generations Z and Alpha, educators cannot actualize *sīla* only through the normative repetition of the *Pañcasīla*. They must translate it into concrete indicators of digital behavior. Right speech prohibits the spread of falsehoods, hate speech, and insults. Refraining from taking what is not given includes respect for personal data, copyright, and academic integrity. The cultivation of awareness also involves the

ability to avoid impulsive use of digital media. In this way, *sīla* connects personal integrity with social responsibility because every digital action can affect the dignity, safety, and well-being of others (Dīgha Nikāya, 1989; Huu Hong, 2022; MacKenzie, 2017; Wright, 2009).

Samādhi functions as a mechanism of mental regulation that connects moral knowledge with concrete action. Within the framework of the Noble Eightfold Path, *samādhi* includes right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, which develop individuals' ability to maintain focus, recognize mental activity, and restrain impulses before they become actions. This function shows that knowledge of right and wrong does not automatically produce ethical behavior when individuals cannot regulate their emotions, attention, and spontaneous reactions. Concentration helps individuals maintain the direction of their actions, while mindfulness enables them to recognize the emergence of anger, attraction, or impulsive urges before responding. In the lives of Generations Z and Alpha, this function relates to their ability to regulate the duration of digital device use, maintain concentration during learning, delay the urge to access content continuously, and avoid immediately responding to online provocation. Therefore, *samādhi* does not relate only to formal meditation practice. It also develops calmness and mental stability in everyday activities. However, concentration without the foundation of *sīla* may become a technical ability that lacks moral direction. In contrast, the integration of both elements develops patience, perseverance, awareness, and resistance to digital stimuli. Thus, *samādhi* strengthens the capacity for self-regulation that young people need to use technology in a measured and responsible manner (Bodhi, 2008; Le, 2022; Wright, 2009).

Paññā occupies the reflective level of Buddhist character education because it enables individuals to understand the relationship among motives, actions, and their moral consequences. Wisdom does not merely refer to academic intelligence or technological proficiency. It also includes the capacity to assess the truth, benefits, risks, and effects of a decision on oneself and others (Remaja VJDJ, 2025). In digital contexts, Generations Z and Alpha demonstrate *paññā* when they verify information sources before sharing them, distinguish facts from manipulation, understand the consequences of digital footprints, and consider the interests of others before posting comments or content. This ability also requires individuals to distinguish needs from desires so that entertainment, social recognition, or unlimited consumption do not fully control their use of technology. This position shows that wisdom operates both reflectively and practically: individuals not only know what is right but also explain its moral basis and anticipate the consequences of their actions. However, *paññā* does not develop automatically through aging or broader access to information. Wisdom requires education, practice, reflection, and the repeated performance of appropriate actions before it becomes part of character. Therefore, *paññā* develops a generation that thinks critically, acts cautiously, resists external influence, and uses technology responsibly. Its integration with *sīla* and *samādhi* ensures that intellectual competence remains oriented toward goodness, self-control, and social well-being (Huu Hong, 2022; MacKenzie, 2017; Truong, 2014; Wright, 2009).

The integration of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* forms a structure of Buddhist character education that operates sequentially and simultaneously. *Sīla* establishes behavioral boundaries by distinguishing actions that individuals should perform from actions that they should avoid. *Samādhi* strengthens individuals' ability to sustain attention, restrain impulses, and maintain emotional stability when they face pressure or stimulation. *Paññā* then guides individuals to evaluate motives, benefits, risks, and moral consequences before making decisions. Although these three elements can be understood as stages, they do not form a rigid sequence. Behavioral regulation supports inner calm, inner calm strengthens clarity of judgment, and wisdom deepens commitment to ethical conduct. In the context of Generations Z and Alpha, this integration allows digital competence to develop alongside respectful behavior, self-control, careful judgment, and social responsibility. Therefore, Buddhist character education should not teach moral prohibitions, concentration practices, or thinking skills as separate components. Educators should develop all three elements in an integrated manner so that young people can recognize what is right, control themselves sufficiently to act accordingly, and understand the reasons and consequences associated with each decision (Bodhi, 2008; Le, 2022; Wright, 2009).

Table 1. Integrative Structure of Buddhist Character Education

Element	Definition	Function in Character Development	Character Indicators	Relevance to Digital Generations
<i>Sīla</i>	Moral discipline that regulates speech, actions, and social relationships	Establishes boundaries between actions that individuals should perform and actions that they should avoid	Honest, respectful, disciplined, considerate of others, and responsible	Avoids spreading falsehoods or hate speech, respects privacy and copyright, and takes responsibility for digital content
<i>Samādhi</i>	Training in mental concentration, attention, and inner stability	Regulates emotions, attention, and impulsive urges before they become actions	Patient, calm, focused, persistent, and self-controlled	Regulates digital device use, maintains concentration, delays impulsive responses, and resists online provocation
<i>Paññā</i>	Wisdom that enables individuals to understand motives, causes, effects,	Guides reflective judgment and appropriate decision-making	Critical, cautious, reflective, resistant to influence,	Verifies information, assesses the benefits and risks of technology, understands

Element	Definition	Function in Character Development	Character Indicators	Relevance to Digital Generations
	and moral consequences		and responsible	digital footprints, and considers the effects of online posts
Integration of the three elements	The unity of moral discipline, mental regulation, and wisdom	Balances ethical behavior, emotional maturity, and intellectual competence	Principled, self-controlled, wise, adaptive, and socially concerned	Uses technology consciously, ethically, proportionately, and for the common good

Source: Synthesized from *Dīgha Nikāya* 31, the framework of the Noble Eightfold Path, and literature on Buddhist character education (Bodhi, 2008; Huu Hong, 2022; Le, 2022; MacKenzie, 2017; Wright, 2009).

Table 1 shows that *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* perform different functions while forming an interdependent structure of character. *Sīla* provides standards of conduct, *samādhi* enables individuals to maintain inner stability, and *paññā* guides them in evaluating the consequences of each decision. This relationship shows that rules alone cannot produce ethical behavior because moral compliance also requires the ability to restrain impulses and understand the ethical reasons behind an action. In digital life, this structure guides Generations Z and Alpha not only to master technology but also to regulate their attention, evaluate information, respect the rights of others, and take responsibility for every action they perform through digital media.

Overall, Buddhist character education approaches moral formation as an integrative process that encompasses conduct, mental conditions, and reflective capacity. *Sīla* prevents harmful behavior while encouraging the cultivation of virtue, *samādhi* transforms external control into internal awareness, and *paññā* ensures that individuals base their actions on critical and responsible judgment. This integration develops individuals who not only comply with moral norms but also consciously understand, internalize, and apply them. For Generations Z and Alpha, this structure can develop individuals who communicate respectfully, exercise self-control, think critically, and use technology wisely. Therefore, *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* provide a conceptual foundation for Buddhist character education that balances digital competence, emotional maturity, and social responsibility (Bodhi, 2008; Le, 2022; Wright, 2009).

2. The Relevance of Buddhist Values to the Character Development of Generations Z and Alpha in the Digital Era

The character development of Generations Z and Alpha in the digital era faces three major challenges: weak self-control, declining quality of social relationships, and limited caution in decision-making. Problems of self-control appear in

difficulties with limiting digital device use, maintaining concentration during learning, and restraining emotional responses to digital stimuli. In the social dimension, online communication increases the possibility of impolite language, insults, bullying, and verbal violence because interactions occur rapidly, at a distance, and often without adequate consideration of others' circumstances. Decision-making problems also arise when young people share content without understanding digital footprints, accept information without verification, or follow online trends without evaluating their benefits and risks. These problems do not indicate that technology serves as the sole cause of character decline because parenting, education, peer environments, and social-emotional maturity also shape young people's behavior. However, digital environments expand the space in which moral problems occur, accelerate their circulation, and amplify the effects of uncontrolled moral decisions. Therefore, character education for Generations Z and Alpha must extend beyond technical competence by strengthening self-regulation, social responsibility, and the ability to critically assess the consequences of actions (Akmal et al., 2020; Arifah et al., 2021; Kurniyati & Arwen, 2020).

Educators can operationalize *sīla* as a foundation for digital ethics because it regulates speech, conduct, and responsibility for the consequences of one's actions. Right speech requires communication that avoids manipulation, deception, and the degradation of others. The principle of non-harm also extends the prohibition of violence into digital spaces by preventing cyberbullying, insults, intimidation, and the circulation of content that damages human dignity. Honesty requires individuals to reject plagiarism, identity falsification, information manipulation, and the dissemination of unverified news. Respect for the rights of others includes the protection of privacy, personal data, intellectual property, and consent before sharing photographs, conversations, or personal information. Digital responsibility also requires individuals to accept the consequences of their posts, comments, and content distribution. These applications show that *sīla* does not function only as a prohibition against misconduct. It also provides active guidance for building respectful, safe, and trustworthy communication. Thus, digital ethics based on *sīla* connects individual moral restraint with social protection because every action in digital spaces can affect the reputation, security, and well-being of others (Dīgha Nikāya, 1989; Huu Hong, 2022; Le, 2022; Wright, 2009).

The *Sigālovāda Sutta* provides a strong relational foundation for the communication ethics embedded in *sīla*. When explaining a person's responsibilities toward friends and companions, the Buddha teaches individuals to act "with generosity; with courteous speech; by offering assistance; by treating them as one treats oneself; and by remaining true to one's word" (*Dīgha Nikāya* 31). This passage presents respectful communication not as a matter of personal style but as a moral obligation that requires consistency between speech and conduct. In digital spaces, the principle of remaining true to one's word rejects manipulative communication, false identities, empty promises, and language that appears benevolent but aims to deceive or harm others. The principle of treating others as oneself also requires digital media users to consider the dignity, privacy, security, and emotional condition of those affected by their posts. Therefore, right speech within *sīla* requires not only factual information but also harmless intentions, respectful

delivery, and a willingness to accept responsibility for the social consequences of every form of digital communication.

Educators can apply *samādhi* as a foundation for digital self-regulation because it develops attention, mental stability, and the ability to restrain reactions before they become actions. For Generations Z and Alpha, self-regulation should not simply prohibit digital device use. Instead, it should develop the ability to set time limits, maintain concentration, recognize emotional changes, and select digital activities according to genuine needs. Individuals with trained attention can more readily recognize the urge to continue scrolling, respond spontaneously to comments, or move aimlessly from one form of content to another. This awareness creates a pause between stimulus and response, allowing users to determine whether they should post a comment, share particular content, or continue a digital activity that either supports learning or intensifies distraction. Therefore, *samādhi* does not refer only to formal meditation practice. It also refers to the ability to remain fully attentive during everyday activities. In learning, this capacity appears in sustained focus. In online communication, it appears in the ability to pause before responding to provocation. In digital device use, it appears in deliberate time management and conscious activity selection. Thus, *samādhi* develops calmness, patience, focus, and resistance to digital stimuli while strengthening young people's capacity to use technology proportionately and responsibly (Bodhi, 2008; Wright, 2009).

Paññā expands digital literacy beyond the ability to operate technology by developing the capacity to evaluate the accuracy, benefits, risks, and moral consequences of its use. In the context of Generations Z and Alpha, technical competence remains inadequate when individuals cannot assess source credibility, distinguish facts from opinions, or identify information manipulation. *Paññā* requires individuals to engage in reflection before they share information, write comments, or produce content. This process requires them to consider the accuracy of information, its effects on the dignity of others, its potential social harm, and the long-term consequences of digital footprints. Wisdom also guides individuals to treat technology not as an end in itself but as a means of learning, communication, creativity, and social service. Therefore, ethical literacy based on *paññā* asks not only whether individuals can perform a digital action but also whether the action is right, beneficial, and harmless. This orientation develops individuals who think critically, act cautiously, resist undue influence, and accept responsibility for their digital decisions. Thus, *paññā* provides an essential foundation for connecting technological competence with moral integrity and social concern (Huu Hong, 2022; MacKenzie, 2017; Truong, 2014; Wright, 2009).

The mapping of digital character challenges and Buddhist values shows that each challenge requires a distinct but interconnected mechanism of character development. *Sīla* provides ethical guidance for speech and conduct, *samādhi* strengthens the regulation of attention and emotion, and *paññā* guides individuals in evaluating the accuracy, benefits, risks, and consequences of an action. Table 2 presents these relationships.

Table 2. Mapping Buddhist Values onto the Character Challenges of Digital Generations

Digital Character Challenge	Primary Buddhist Value	Application in Digital Life	Character Indicators
Difficulty controlling digital device use	<i>Samādhi</i>	Setting time limits, controlling the urge to continuously access content, and selecting activities according to actual needs	Self-controlled, disciplined, and aware
Disrupted concentration during learning	<i>Samādhi</i>	Sustaining attention, reducing distractions, and completing learning activities before moving to other content	Focused, persistent, and consistent
Emotional and impulsive responses	<i>Samādhi</i> and <i>sīla</i>	Pausing before replying to comments, recognizing emotions, and avoiding responses that harm others	Patient, calm, and respectful
Disrespectful communication and cyberbullying	<i>Sīla</i>	Practicing right speech and avoiding insults, intimidation, hate speech, and verbal violence	Respectful, empathetic, and considerate of others
Plagiarism and the spread of false information	<i>Sīla</i> and <i>paññā</i>	Acknowledging sources, verifying information, and refusing to distribute unverified content	Honest, critical, and responsible
Violations of privacy and personal data	<i>Sīla</i> and <i>paññā</i>	Obtaining consent before sharing another person's data, photographs, conversations, or personal information	Respectful of others' rights and cautious
Limited awareness of digital footprints	<i>Paññā</i>	Considering short- and long-term consequences before posting or commenting on content	Reflective and responsible
Difficulty distinguishing facts, opinions, and manipulation	<i>Paññā</i>	Checking sources, comparing information, and assessing the motives behind content	Critical and resistant to influence
Imbalance between online and social life	Integration of <i>sīla</i> , <i>samādhi</i> , and <i>paññā</i>	Regulating digital activities without neglecting family, school,	Balanced, caring, and adaptive

Digital Character Challenge	Primary Buddhist Value	Application in Digital Life	Character Indicators
Technology without a clear purpose	<i>Paññā</i> and <i>samādhi</i>	friendships, and social responsibilities	
		Directing technology toward learning, creative work, communication, and social benefit	Wise, productive, and benefit-oriented

Source: Synthesized from the principles of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* in Buddhist character education and literature on the character of Generations Z and Alpha (Akmal et al., 2020; Bodhi, 2008; Huu Hong, 2022; Le, 2022; MacKenzie, 2017; Wright, 2009).

Table 2 shows that no single value can independently address all digital character challenges. Problems involving harmful communication and conduct primarily require the strengthening of *sīla*, while disruptions of attention and impulsive responses require the cultivation of *samādhi*. Difficulties in evaluating information, understanding digital footprints, and considering the consequences of actions require the development of *paññā*. Although each value addresses a different aspect of character, all three values support one another. Behavioral regulation without mental stability can easily weaken when individuals face provocation, while concentration without wisdom cannot ensure the ethical use of technology. Therefore, the character development of Generations Z and Alpha requires the integration of moral discipline, self-regulation, and reflective judgment so that digital competence develops alongside integrity and social responsibility.

The integration of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* shapes the character profile of digital generations who not only use technology competently but also exercise self-control, communicate respectfully, and accept responsibility for every digital action. *Sīla* cultivates honesty, respect, empathy, and awareness of the obligation not to harm others. *Samādhi* strengthens the ability to sustain attention, regulate emotions, and restrain impulsive responses. Meanwhile, *paññā* guides individuals to evaluate information, understand the consequences of digital footprints, and select beneficial uses of technology. The integration of these three values develops individuals who critically assess information, resist external influence, and distinguish genuine digital needs from consumerist impulses. This character profile also includes the ability to balance online activities with direct social relationships so that technology does not replace responsibilities toward families, schools, and communities. From a Buddhist perspective, the character of digital generations therefore reflects the integration of moral integrity, mental stability, reflective competence, and social concern. Technology does not occupy the center of life but serves as a means of learning, communication, creative expression, and contribution to the well-being of others (Bodhi, 2008; Le, 2022; Wright, 2009).

3. The Roles of Families, Formal Schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools in Character Internalization

No single institution can assume full responsibility for internalizing Buddhist character because moral development occurs through continuous role modeling, habituation, instruction, and value reinforcement. Families establish basic habits through parenting practices, rules, and parental examples. Formal schools integrate character development into learning processes, communication, discipline, and relationships among students. Meanwhile, Buddhist Sunday Schools strengthen students' understanding of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* through Dhamma instruction, reflection, and age-appropriate moral practice. These three educational environments perform different but interdependent functions. Inconsistencies among the values taught by religious institutions, the behavior modeled at home, and the habits developed at school can weaken character internalization. Therefore, consistent messages, role models, and rules across institutions constitute essential conditions for developing disciplined and responsible members of Generations Z and Alpha who can use technology ethically (Gunawan, 2022; Le, 2022; Loeung & Phal, 2025).

The family serves as the first environment for character internalization because children learn values through role models, rules, dialogue, and everyday habits. The *Sigālovāda Sutta* states that parents must “restrain their children from wrongdoing, encourage them to do good, [and] teach them a profession” (*Dīgha Nikāya* 31). This principle shows that parental responsibility extends beyond supervision and prohibition. Parents must actively guide children so that they can distinguish appropriate conduct from harmful behavior. In digital life, parents should model measured technology use, establish consistent rules for digital device use, and initiate open discussions about their children's online experiences. Families should also cultivate respectful speech, respect for privacy, and responsibility for shared content. This form of guidance supports character internalization more effectively than unilateral control because children understand the moral reasons behind each rule. Family activities that involve cooperation, care, and service to others can also strengthen empathy so that digital interactions do not diminish children's social sensitivity. Therefore, parenting based on role modeling, communication, and habituation provides a foundation for the Buddhist character development of Generations Z and Alpha (Gunawan, 2022).

Formal schools transform Buddhist values into organized social practices through instruction, role modeling, and school culture. Schools should not confine character education to a single subject. Instead, they should integrate it into teachers' communication, classroom management, technology use, and conflict resolution. Teachers should model respectful, fair, and non-degrading speech, while learning activities should cultivate honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and reflection before action. Schools should also establish educational rules for digital device use, such as limiting device use at specific times, protecting privacy, and prohibiting plagiarism and cyberbullying. Schools should not address violations through punishment alone. They should also encourage dialogue about motives, consequences, and behavioral improvement. Therefore, educational assessment should evaluate the development of discipline, empathy, self-control, and social responsibility rather than academic achievement alone. This integration enables

schools to create environments that support the application of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* in students' daily lives (Damnoen et al., 2021; Gunawan, 2022; Le, 2022).

Buddhist Sunday Schools strengthen moral and spiritual identity through contextual, participatory instruction that corresponds with the developmental stages of Generations Z and Alpha. Educators can translate Buddhist values into *Jātaka* stories that provide moral examples, simulations of digital ethical problems, brief attention exercises, and discussions of the consequences of actions. These approaches help students connect Buddhist teachings with concrete experiences, such as cyberbullying, the spread of false information, privacy violations, and excessive digital device use. Social and service activities can also ensure that loving-kindness, empathy, and responsibility extend beyond cognitive understanding and become concrete actions. In addition, projects that involve producing positive digital content can direct students' creativity toward respectful, educational, and beneficial communication. Therefore, Buddhist Sunday Schools should not merely transmit doctrine. They should also cultivate reflective habits, social concern, and the ability to apply *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* in digital life (Fu et al., 2026; Jadhav & Shaikh, 2026; Le, 2022; Loeung & Phal, 2025).

Collaboration among families, formal schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools can follow four continuous stages. The first stage introduces values by explaining the meanings of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* in language appropriate to students' ages. The second stage provides role models through consistent behavior by parents, teachers, and religious instructors in communication, technology use, and conflict resolution. The third stage develops habituation by applying these values through rules for digital device use, respectful communication, academic honesty, respect for privacy, and participation in social activities. The fourth stage promotes reflection by evaluating the motives, actions, and moral consequences of students' experiences in both physical and digital spaces. These four stages cannot operate separately because value introduction without role modeling produces only formal knowledge, while habituation without reflection may produce mechanical compliance. Therefore, institutions should build collaboration through consistent messages, regular communication, and joint evaluation so that Generations Z and Alpha can internalize character values consistently (Gunawan, 2022; Le, 2022; Loeung & Phal, 2025).

Consistent behavioral changes in daily life indicate successful Buddhist character internalization. Children can limit their digital device use without constant supervision, communicate respectfully, and verify information before sharing it. They also demonstrate value internalization when they show empathy in online interactions, respect privacy, and accept responsibility for their comments, posts, or content. When conflicts arise, children do not immediately respond with verbal violence. Instead, they regulate their emotions, engage in dialogue, and consider how their actions may affect others. They also direct technology use toward learning, creativity, healthy communication, and social service. These indicators show that *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* have moved beyond normative knowledge and developed into relatively stable moral habits. Therefore, educators should not measure the success of character education only through students' ability to explain Buddhist teachings. They should also examine the consistency

among students' understanding, self-control, and concrete actions in physical and digital spaces (Gunawan, 2022; Le, 2022; Loeung & Phal, 2025).

DISCUSSION

The study shows that Buddhist character education for Generations Z and Alpha develops through the integration of *sīla*, *samādhī*, and *paññā*. *Sīla* provides an ethical foundation for speech, conduct, and social relationships. *Samādhī* strengthens the regulation of attention, emotions, and impulsive urges, while *paññā* guides critical judgments about the benefits, risks, and moral consequences of technology use. These three values address digital character problems, including uncontrolled digital device use, disrespectful communication, cyberbullying, the circulation of unverified information, and limited awareness of digital footprints. No single institution can internalize these values independently. Families, formal schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools must collaborate through value introduction, role modeling, habituation, and reflection. Therefore, Buddhist character education does not merely cultivate moral compliance. It also develops self-regulation, reflective competence, empathy, and social responsibility so that young people can use technology consciously, ethically, and beneficially.

This relationship emerges because digital character problems do not result only from limited moral knowledge. They also arise from weak control over attention, emotions, and decisions within fast-moving environments. Young people may understand that bullying, dishonesty, and privacy violations constitute wrongful conduct, but this knowledge does not always prevent misconduct when they face provocation, seek social recognition, or encounter continuous streams of information. Under these conditions, *sīla* establishes ethical boundaries, *samādhī* creates a pause between stimulus and response, and *paññā* enables individuals to evaluate the consequences of their choices. The effectiveness of these three values also depends on the consistency of educational environments. When families, schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools communicate conflicting messages, moral values tend to remain formal knowledge. In contrast, consistency among rules, role models, habituation, and reflection transforms values into stable habits. Digital character therefore develops not through prohibition alone but through the interaction of moral orientation, self-regulation, reflective competence, and sustained social support.

These findings reinforce previous studies that describe Buddhist education as a process of cultivating virtue, while extending that perspective to the digital character of Generations Z and Alpha. MacKenzie (2017), Wright (2009), Øvrelid (2008), and Hong (2022) argue that Buddhist character develops through the regulation of greed, hatred, and ignorance, as well as through the cultivation of morality and wisdom. This study supports that position but demonstrates that educators must translate Buddhist virtues into more operational forms, including digital communication ethics, regulation of digital device use, information verification, privacy protection, and responsibility for digital footprints. The findings also support Le (2022), Jadhav and Shaikh (2026), and Fu et al. (2026), who emphasize the roles of Buddhist education, *Jātaka* stories, and moral habituation in developing students' behavior. However, those studies focus on particular

educational components, whereas this study integrates *sīla* as behavioral regulation, *samādhi* as the regulation of attention and emotion, and *paññā* as the foundation of ethical decision-making. At the institutional level, the findings correspond with Gunawan (2022) and Loeung and Phal (2025) regarding the importance of families and schools in character formation, but this study adds Buddhist Sunday Schools as strategic actors that connect Dhamma instruction with students' digital experiences. The novelty of this study therefore lies in its construction of an integrated Buddhist character education framework that combines the three Buddhist trainings, the relational ethics of the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, digital moral challenges, and collaboration among families, formal schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools.

These findings contribute to a broader understanding by positioning Buddhist character education not merely as the transmission of religious values but as an integrative framework for understanding moral formation amid technological change. This contribution appears in the integration of three dimensions that previous approaches often separate: behavioral regulation through *sīla*, attention and emotional regulation through *samādhi*, and critical judgment through *paññā*. This framework shows that rules for technology use and technical literacy alone cannot adequately address digital ethical problems because they do not fully engage users' motivations, self-control, and moral responsibility. The findings also broaden the understanding of character by showing that individuals do not develop it independently. Instead, consistent relationships among families, formal schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools shape moral development. Buddhist character education therefore connects personal, social, and institutional dimensions. At the conceptual level, this study enriches character education research by positioning mental regulation and reflective wisdom as central elements. At the practical level, the framework provides a foundation for digital ethics education that develops not only technological competence but also respectful conduct, self-control, critical thinking, and social responsibility.

The implications of this study indicate that efforts to strengthen the character of Generations Z and Alpha must shift from an educational orientation that emphasizes rule compliance toward one that develops comprehensive moral capacities. Families should adopt digital parenting practices that combine role modeling, dialogue, limits on digital device use, and reflective guidance. Formal schools should integrate digital ethics into instruction, communication culture, responses to bullying, and behavioral assessment rather than treat it as supplementary material. Buddhist Sunday Schools should also update their instructional methods so that students can apply *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* through digital case studies, attention exercises, moral discussions, and the production of beneficial content. At the policy level, shared guidelines, regular communication, and observable indicators of character development should support collaboration among the three educational environments. However, educators should not reduce the application of Buddhist values to religious symbols or doctrinal repetition because students internalize values only when they experience consistency among the values they learn, the behavior adults model, and the social structures that organize their lives. The main implication of this study therefore concerns the need to build an educational ecosystem that allows digital competence to develop alongside moral integrity, self-control, wisdom, and social concern.

Based on these findings, policymakers should direct their actions toward establishing an integrated Buddhist character education ecosystem among families, formal schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools. Governments, educational institutions, and religious organizations should develop shared guidelines that translate *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* into indicators of digital behavior, including respectful communication, regulated digital device use, information verification, respect for privacy, and responsibility for digital footprints. Schools should integrate digital ethics into curricula, codes of conduct, teaching methods, responses to bullying, and assessments of student development. Parents should receive guidance on digital parenting, responsible role modeling in technology use, and reflective communication with children. Meanwhile, Buddhist Sunday Schools should develop contextual modules through *Jātaka* stories, attention exercises, digital conflict simulations, and positive content-production projects. Institutions should support these policies through teacher and instructor training, interinstitutional communication forums, and regular evaluations based on observable behavioral changes. Policies should not stop at prohibiting digital devices or repeating doctrine because repressive and symbolic approaches often produce only temporary compliance. Therefore, policy actions should combine clear rules, adult role modeling, consistent habituation, opportunities for dialogue, and moral reflection so that digital competence develops alongside self-control, integrity, empathy, and social responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Buddhist character education offers a relevant framework for addressing the moral challenges that Generations Z and Alpha face in the digital era. This framework integrates *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. *Sīla* guides speech and conduct so that individuals do not harm others. *Samādhi* strengthens the regulation of attention, emotions, and impulsive urges, while *paññā* develops the ability to assess the accuracy, benefits, risks, and moral consequences of technology use. The integration of these three values can develop young people who communicate respectfully, evaluate information critically, regulate their digital device use, respect privacy, and accept responsibility for their digital footprints. However, individuals cannot internalize these values independently. Families, formal schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools must establish consistency through value introduction, role modeling, habituation, guidance, and moral reflection.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in its construction of a Buddhist character education framework that connects the three Buddhist trainings with digital ethical challenges and the educational environments of Generations Z and Alpha. This study extends previous research, which tends to examine Buddhist virtues, moral education, or the roles of educational institutions separately. The framework positions *sīla* as the foundation of digital ethics, *samādhi* as the foundation of digital self-regulation, and *paññā* as the foundation of digital ethical literacy. This study also positions the principle of relational responsibility in the *Sigālovāda Sutta* as the basis for collaboration among families, formal schools, and Buddhist Sunday Schools. The framework confirms that educators must develop

digital competence alongside moral integrity, mental stability, reflective capacity, empathy, and social responsibility.

This study has limitations because it relies on a literature review and therefore does not empirically examine the application or effectiveness of the proposed framework in the lives of Generations Z and Alpha. The analysis also depends on Buddhist texts, academic literature, and secondary sources that represent different social, cultural, and educational contexts. Therefore, this study cannot explain variations in value internalization based on age, parenting styles, school environments, intensity of technology use, or the characteristics of Buddhist communities. Future studies should employ field-based qualitative approaches, mixed methods, or intervention research involving students, parents, teachers, and Buddhist Sunday School instructors. Further research should also develop instruments that measure digital self-control, communication ethics, ethical literacy, online empathy, and responsibility for digital footprints so that researchers can evaluate and refine the Buddhist character education framework more systematically.

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