

Identity at Your Fingertips: The Erosion of Sundanese Culture in the Unstoppable Flow of Digitalization

Gunawan¹, Jajang Hendar Hendrawan¹, Feni Awati Darmana¹

¹ Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Pasundan Cimahi, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Digitalization has become a transformative force that has fundamentally changed the social, cultural, and educational patterns of modern society. In Indonesia, particularly among the Sundanese people, the massive wave of digitalization poses a serious challenge in the form of erosion of local cultural identity due to the dominance of a homogeneous and instant global culture. This phenomenon has a significant impact on the younger generation who grow up in a digital ecosystem and are potentially experiencing cultural identity disorientation. This study aims to analyze digitalization as an accelerating factor in the erosion of Sundanese cultural identity and to examine the strategic role of education in preserving and revitalizing this cultural identity in the digital age. The research method used is a qualitative approach with a library research study through the analysis of various scientific sources, educational policy documents, and statistical data related to digitalization and culture. The results of the study show that the high penetration of the internet and the dominance of global digital culture accelerate the erosion of the Sundanese language, values of collectivism, and local wisdom among the younger generation. Education has a central role as the last bastion in preserving cultural identity through the integration of local values into the curriculum, particularly through the Merdeka Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. The creative and ethical use of digital technology based on local wisdom has proven to be an important strategy for shaping a digitally literate generation that is also deeply rooted in culture, because a great nation is one that is able to preserve and nurture its culture amid changing times.

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Corresponding Author:

Gunawan

Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Pasundan Cimahi, Indonesia, rechtgun@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Human civilization is currently at the lowest point of its most fundamental transformation since the Industrial Revolution, where the transition from physical space to digital space has become an inevitability that no nation can avoid (Haqqi & Wijayati, 2019). Digitalization is no longer merely a peripheral technological development, but has become the central nervous system that drives all aspects of life, from the economy and politics to the most intimate sociocultural structures. In the Indonesian context, this phenomenon presents a complex paradox; on the one hand, democratic access to information opens up opportunities for collective intellectual progress, but on the other hand, it carries the latent threat of eroding local cultural identities that have been the moral anchor of the nation for centuries. Contemporary society, especially the younger generation growing up in a digital ecosystem, now faces the challenge of navigating itself amid the massive tide of global cultural homogenization. National resilience is no longer measured solely by military strength or economic stability, but by the extent to which a nation is able to maintain its cultural integrity in the face of technological disruption that can penetrate national borders without adequate filters.

Understanding digitalization as an inevitability requires an in-depth review of penetration data and user behavior, which shows exponential growth trends. Based on the latest data from the Digital 2025 report, the world now has more than 5.64 billion people connected online, reflecting an increase of 144 million users in the last year alone. This phenomenon is reinforced by the fact that short video consumption has become the main activity for 87.5 percent of adults globally every week, indicating a shift in the way humans consume information from text to instant and repetitive visuals. In Indonesia, this dynamic is clearly reflected in the 2024 survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), which noted that the national internet penetration rate has reached a significant 79.5 percent. This figure is equivalent to approximately 221,630,000 people who are connected to the internet, an increase of around 1.4 to 1.5 percent compared to the 2023 period (APJII, 2024).

Digital transformation in Indonesia has not occurred uniformly across all regions, but rather shows a strong concentration in certain areas, particularly on the island of Java, which has the highest penetration rate at 80.66 percent (Suparjo, 2024). This places the people of Java, including West Java as the base of Sundanese culture, at the forefront of interaction with the global flow of information. Demographically, this penetration is dominated by the productive age group and the younger generation. Millennials aged 28 to 43 years old recorded the highest penetration rate of 93.17 percent, followed by Generation Z aged 12 to 27 years old with a penetration rate of 87.02 percent. Although millennials have the highest penetration rate, Generation Z is the largest contributor in terms of internet usage, reaching 34.4 percent, which confirms their position as the main drivers of the digital economy and cyber culture in Indonesia. Conversely, Generation Alpha, aged under 12, has a penetration rate of 48.1 percent, while Generation X (aged 44-59) stands at 83.69 percent (Novina Putri Bestari, 2024).

The narrowing of the gender gap in internet access is also an important indicator of the inevitability of digitalization. Data shows that internet penetration among men has reached 87.6 percent, while women are close behind at 85.5 percent. In terms of usage contribution, the difference is even smaller, with men contributing 50.7 percent and women 49.1 percent. These statistics imply that digitalization has become an inclusive social infrastructure, reaching various strata regardless of gender background, which in turn accelerates the massive spread of new values into the private spaces of families across the country. The emergence of artificial intelligence technology, such as the use of ChatGPT, which has reached 37 percent of Generation Z internet users in a short period of time, further emphasizes that human dependence on digital technology will continue to increase systematically in the future.

The dominance of digital technology in everyday life has triggered a profound shift in social and cultural patterns for the younger generation, especially Generation Z and Generation Alpha. These generations no longer recognize clear boundaries between the physical and virtual worlds, where their identities are formed and expressed through social media platforms that often promote a uniform global narrative. Sociologists often refer to this phenomenon as the intensification of social relationships around the world, connecting local communities with global events without geographical barriers. As a result,

the younger generation's perspective on local culture has undergone significant changes; traditional values are often considered outdated or no longer relevant to the fast-paced dynamics of modern life.

Cultural homogenization becomes a real risk when the values, norms, and lifestyles of developed countries that dominate the mass media are widely adopted by individuals in various parts of the world. This creates new global cultural standards in terms of clothing, food, and entertainment, which tend to ignore the uniqueness of local identities. The younger generation, as the group most exposed to this flow of information, tends to imitate global popular culture as a symbol of progress and modernity, which in the long run can damage the original cultural structure of the Indonesian nation. This phenomenon is called cultural disorientation, a condition in which people lose their direction in their cultural identity due to excessive dependence on external narratives that enter through a single click on their mobile devices.

Specifically, this cultural shift is evident in several aspects of life. Social interactions that were originally face-to-face and based on physical kinship have now shifted to platform-based interactions in virtual communities that are often anonymous. Sources of identity have also shifted from local customs and history to global trends driven by social media influencers. People's consumption patterns have also changed from dependence on local products to a consumptive lifestyle through global e-commerce. In addition, life values that uphold collectivism and mutual cooperation are slowly being eroded by individualism and narcissistic digital competition. Language use has also undergone changes, with regional languages as the main language being replaced by national and foreign languages (English or global slang) in everyday communication (Aisy et al., 2025).

This change in communication patterns is a critical indicator of shifting identities. The use of regional languages, which are the main symbols of ethnic identity, is now being abandoned by young people in their daily interactions. Many young people prefer to use foreign words or Indonesian, which is considered more "respectable" than regional languages. The inability or unwillingness to use their mother tongue not only disrupts intergenerational communication but also eliminates the philosophical content and local wisdom contained in the structure of the language. In urban areas such as Cimahi, research shows a drastic decline in the use of Sundanese among teenagers, which, if not immediately addressed, could lead to the slow but certain extinction of the language.

Amidst the onslaught of digitalization, Sundanese culture remains one of the main pillars of local identity, possessing extraordinary philosophical value. Sundanese culture is not merely a collection of traditional arts such as angklung or jaipong dance, but a comprehensive worldview regarding the relationship between humans and God, fellow humans, and the natural environment. One of the most fundamental manifestations of Sundanese local wisdom is the trias-kearifan philosophy: *Silih Asah*, *Silih Asih*, and *Silih Asuh*. This philosophy upholds the spirit of togetherness and unity, which is very much in line with the values of Pancasila, especially the third principle of Indonesian Unity.

Silih Asah is interpreted as the act of mutual enlightenment or "mutual sharpening," in which each individual has a responsibility to share knowledge, insights, and wisdom with one another. In the context of education, *Silih Asah* reflects openness in transforming information without rigid hierarchical barriers, thereby creating a literate and critical society. *Silih Asih* represents the power of compassion, which is the key to all noble human behavior. This value demands honesty in speech, dedication, and empathy, which serve as social controls to prevent hatred and division in society. *Silih Asuh* means to guide, protect, nurture, and care for one another, which implies an awareness of equality among all living beings. This principle is very important in maintaining social harmony, where those who are more experienced guide the younger generation so that they do not lose their cultural roots (Alhafizh et al., 2021).

Sundanese philosophy also emphasizes the concept of "*Silih*," which connotatively means to replace or take the place of another person, an expression of deep empathy. In the traditional Sundanese social structure, the relationship between "*Resi*" (educators/intellectuals), '*Ratu*' (leaders/government), and "*Rama*" (the general public/elders) is parallel and complementary, where the independence of each position still implies dependence on the functions of the others to create social unity. This principle of interconnectivity is a valuable social asset in the digital age, which is often individualistic. By making

local wisdom the foundation of digital ethics, the people of West Java can develop wiser behaviors, such as prioritizing polite communication (ngabagea) and maintaining harmony with nature and others (mikanyaah ka alam) in all their digital activities (Sukarna et al., 2023).

Education is the most vital and strategic instrument in maintaining Indonesia's national identity amid globalization and the 4.0 industrial revolution. Through educational institutions, the noble values of the nation contained in Pancasila and local wisdom are systematically passed on to future generations. The Merdeka Curriculum currently being implemented provides more space for the integration of local culture through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). This program is designed to develop students who are not only academically excellent but also have characters that reflect the values of Pancasila, including critical thinking, mutual cooperation, and global diversity.

The integration of local wisdom into the education curriculum serves as a protective barrier for students' cultural identity from the negative impacts of global homogenization. Research shows that students who are involved in culture-based learning, such as learning regional languages, traditions, and local social values, tend to have higher self-confidence and pride in their identity. One innovative approach in primary education is the integration of science concepts with local wisdom, for example, teaching the concept of "Changes in the Form of Objects" through the local cultural practice of making brown sugar, which has been proven to increase student engagement and appreciation for their own traditions. In addition, traditional games such as Gobak Sodor are being reintroduced in schools to train problem-solving skills, reaction speed, and physical teamwork.

However, this implementation faces various challenges in terms of the Pancasila student profile in the field. In terms of global diversity, the main challenge is the dominance of foreign popular culture on social media, which often makes students idolize foreign cultures more than their own. In terms of mutual cooperation, individualism triggered by dependence on gadgets and online games is a major obstacle to local collectivism values. In terms of critical thinking, the lack of digital reference sources and teaching materials on local wisdom makes it difficult for students to filter global information. In addition, teachers' limited digital design skills are an obstacle to creativity in adapting local culture to modern content. An inferiority complex towards global trends also hinders students' independence in feeling confident about their original cultural identity.

Substantially, many teachers do not yet have a deep understanding of the P5 concept or effective ways to link national learning outcomes to the context of local wisdom in their regions. Limited human resources and a lack of teaching materials documented in digital format are major obstacles to the sustainability of this program. Often, cultural integration in schools only stops at a symbolic level or momentary celebrations without touching on the substantial aspects of character building. Therefore, professional training for educators and the provision of an easily accessible local cultural database are needed to support a meaningful learning process (Anggraini et al., 2025).

The erosion of cultural identity has now escalated into a serious problem for the mental sovereignty of the Indonesian nation. The decline in the vitality of local cultures, most evident in the extinction of regional languages, reflects a deep crisis of collective consciousness. Data from the Language Development and Guidance Agency in 2024 reveals alarming facts about the status of regional languages in Indonesia. Of the total 718 regional languages, only 18 are considered secure (still widely used by all generations). A total of 21 languages are vulnerable because they are beginning to be abandoned by children, and 3 other languages are in decline because they are only used by older people and are no longer passed down to children. The most critical condition is that there are 29 regional languages that are threatened with extinction (only used by the older generation), 8 languages in critical condition (only a few older speakers remain), and 11 languages that are declared completely extinct.

The main cause of this degradation is a shift in language attitudes among younger speakers, who favor monolingualism in the national language or foreign languages due to economic and social mobility demands. The process of "cultural invasion" through communication technology has exploited weaknesses in local cultural awareness to flood the public sphere with foreign values that are often incompatible with the national character. This has resulted in the loss of the distinctive characteristics of

cultural heritage, which, if left unchecked, will destroy the integrity of the national culture as a whole. Communities that have lost their cultural roots become very vulnerable to social instability, including being easily provoked by hoaxes or radical teachings that can divide unity.

The impact of cultural erosion also extends to the non-military sector of national resilience. National resilience currently depends heavily on the social capital of a society based on noble values. When values such as mutual cooperation and respect for diversity (multiculturalism) fade, society loses the cohesive force that unites them amid the nation's diversity. The phenomenon of "cultural disorientation" experienced by the younger generation makes them apathetic towards cultural preservation efforts and even ashamed to participate in their own regional traditions. This identity crisis is not just a matter of aesthetics or nostalgia for the past, but a real threat to social stability and the survival of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia in this era of disruption (Wibowo & Lutfiana, 2023).

Given the complexity of the challenges faced, there is an urgent need to revive cultural awareness across all levels of society, especially among the younger generation. Cultural awareness does not mean closing oneself off from progress, but rather the ability to adapt to technology without losing one's identity. The digital era should be used as a great opportunity to revive local culture through creative and innovative digitization strategies. Various cultural revitalization initiatives have begun to emerge, such as the digitization of tangible and intangible heritage through the e-Gamelan application or virtual museums. Platform-based education has also been strengthened with the emergence of initiatives such as Sunda Digital at Padjadjaran University or the online Sundanese dictionary application.

One strategic initiative is the use of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technology to provide an immersive cultural experience. A concrete example is the launch of the "EduLaras Virtual Museum" prototype by the Indonesia University of Education, which allows users to virtually explore and learn how to play various traditional musical instruments such as the angklung, rebab, karinding, and tarawangsa. In addition, creative cultural content has also begun to develop in the form of regional cultural vlogs and local history podcasts in Sundanese that are relevant to the younger generation. Local value-based digital ethics are also being promoted through the application of the Silih Asah-Asih-Asuh philosophy on social media, as well as the integration of local content into online learning or e-learning curricula.

Cultural revitalization also requires strong policy support from the government. The launch of the Learning Digitalization Program for Smart Indonesia in 2025 is a strategic step to accelerate educational transformation that remains rooted in national identity. Cultural awareness must be built through a holistic approach that includes strengthening teacher capacity through continuous training, actively involving parents in guiding their children's media use, and providing incentives for local content creators who highlight regional cultural themes. Ultimately, Indonesia's success in weathering the storm of digitalization will depend heavily on its ability to use local wisdom as a moral compass in navigating the boundless ocean of global information (Widiatmaka, 2022).

Identity transformation in the digital age is a long journey that requires consistency and collaboration from all components of the nation. Digitalization is an inevitable sociological reality, but cultural identity is the lifeblood that gives meaning to technological progress. Sundanese culture, with its philosophy of Silih Asah, Silih Asih, and Silih Asuh, offers a harmonious middle ground between tradition and modernity. Education must be at the forefront in instilling this awareness, so that Indonesia's younger generation not only becomes technologically savvy global citizens, but also remains individuals who are proud of their cultural roots and loyal to the noble values of Pancasila. Only with a strong cultural awareness will Indonesia be able to stand firm as a dignified nation amid the dynamics of global civilization.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research type of study. This approach was chosen to thoroughly examine the phenomenon of the erosion of Sundanese cultural identity in the flow of digitalization from an educational perspective. The research data was sourced from secondary

data, including books, scientific journal articles, educational policy documents such as the Merdeka Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), as well as reports and statistical data from official institutions relevant to digitalization and culture. Data collection was carried out through documentary studies by searching for and reviewing credible and relevant written sources. Data analysis was performed using content analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, theme classification, interpretation, and conclusion drawing to emphasize the urgency of the role of education in preserving and strengthening Sundanese cultural identity in the digital era, with data validity maintained through source triangulation.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Digitalization as an Accelerating Factor in the Erosion of Sundanese Cultural Identity

The results of the research obtained must be supported by adequate data. The results of the research and findings must be the answers, or research hypotheses that have been stated previously in the introduction.

The transfer of social space from the physical environment to the digital environment is a necessity driven by the exponential advancement of information and communication technology. The Sundanese people, as part of the global community, are now no longer only interacting in a limited geographical space, but have moved to a virtual space that knows no time and territory limits. This shift is changing the essence of human interaction, where physical presence is replaced by digital representation, and emotional closeness is often compromised by the speed of data transmission. Digitalization has become a system that shapes the way individuals perceive reality, build identities, and establish relationships with others (Kusnanto et al., 2024).

In a sociological context, digitization creates a mindset that tends to be instant, pragmatic, and sometimes superficial among the younger generation. Social media algorithms designed to maximize user engagement often direct them to content that is homogeneous and globally popular, while contemplative and profound local wisdom values tend to be marginalized. This triggers social disorganization in which traditional value structures lose their authority in regulating individual behavior, especially for those who spend more time in virtual interactions than in physical gatherings within indigenous communities or families.

The very high level of internet penetration in Indonesia, especially in Java and West Java, is accelerating this transformation process on a massive scale (Wang et al., 2023). Based on the latest statistics, internet access has reached almost all segments of society, with consistent growth in recent years.

Period	National Internet Penetration (%)
2018	64,80
2020	77,01
2022	78,19
2023	79,50
2024	73,70
2025	80,66

The data above shows that in 2025, national internet penetration is expected to reach its highest point, namely 80.66%. West Java, as the region with the largest population in Indonesia, has a penetration rate that exceeds the national average, reaching 84.69%. This high figure shows that access to the global flow of information is very open to the Sundanese people, which on the one hand provides economic and educational opportunities, but on the other hand poses a major risk to the sustainability of local cultural identity. The main actors in the current digital culture dynamics are Generation Z and Generation Alpha (Santi et al., 2025). They are the demographic group that is most active in using the internet and most exposed to outside cultural influences. Internet penetration data based on age

categories shows that the younger generation dominates the use of this technology, which directly places them as both subjects and objects of the cultural changes that are taking place.

Age Group / Generation	Internet Penetration Rate (%)	Contribution of Utilization (%)
Millennials (28–43 years old)	93,17	30,62
Generation Z (12–27 years old)	87,02	34,40
Generation X (44–59 years old)	83,69	-
Generation Alpha (<12 years old)	48,10	9,17

Generation Z contributes the largest share of internet usage, at 34.4%, reflecting their high dependence on digital platforms in their daily activities. This dependence covers various aspects, ranging from social media consumption, information searches, economic transactions, to entertainment. For Sundanese youth in this age group, their identity is no longer shaped exclusively by family traditions or their surrounding environment, but is constructed through interaction with global trends that often conflict with the Sundanese philosophy of life. The high duration of daily internet use is also a strong indicator of how digital space has taken up a large portion of people's social lives. Most users spend between 4 and 6 hours per day surfing the virtual world, and a small percentage even use the internet for more than 10 hours a day. This long duration reduces opportunities for the younger generation to have quality face-to-face interactions with their parents or community leaders, thereby naturally hindering the transfer of Sundanese cultural values and language.

The influx of global popular culture through digital media has triggered a phenomenon of cultural homogenization, where aesthetic standards, lifestyles, and social behaviors around the world tend to become uniform. The dominance of Western culture and now the influence of East Asian culture (such as K-Pop and J-Pop) have become the main reference points for the younger generation in West Java, who often consider foreign cultures to be more modern, prestigious, and relevant than their own local culture. This has led to the marginalization of Sundanese culture, where traditional elements such as performing arts, traditional clothing, and even life philosophies are perceived as relics of the past that have been left behind.

Identity disorientation occurs when individuals lose their cultural roots and feel alienated in their own society. Many Sundanese teenagers today feel more familiar with the lifestyles of global celebrities than with local heroes or values such as *silih asah*, *silih asih*, and *silih asuh*. The lack of interest in learning about and preserving local culture stems from the perception that local identity does not provide sufficient “social capital” in a digital global society. Ironically, digital technology, which should be a tool for promoting culture, is more often used as a means to adopt foreign cultures wholesale without any critical filtering process.

The impact of this homogenization is clearly seen in changes in cultural consumption tastes. The younger generation tends to choose music, films, and games that have a global production scale over local artworks with ethnic nuances. Although there have been efforts by the creative community to digitize Sundanese art, without strong ecosystem support and a paradigm shift among young audiences, these efforts often only reach a very limited audience. If this condition is allowed to continue, the richness of Sundanese culture is threatened with becoming only an object of historical study for future generations, rather than a living and breathing culture in the daily lives of its people (Syakhsyiyah et al., 2025). The main characteristic of Sundanese society is strong collectivism, which is manifested in the spirit of mutual cooperation and *sabilulungan*. However, the shift from face-to-face to virtual interactions has slowly eroded these values of togetherness. Virtual interactions, which are often anonymous and transactional in nature, tend to encourage individualistic behavior, where people focus more on their respective digital images than on building real social solidarity in their physical environment. This phenomenon is referred to as social disorganization, where the norms that govern harmony within a group begin to lose their power.

The culture of *riung mungpulung*, which used to be a means of solving problems together, is now being replaced by chat groups on social media, which are often prone to misunderstandings and conflicts (Salahudin, 2023). The value of *someah* or hospitality, which is characteristic of the Sundanese people, is often not reflected in digital communication behavior, where hate speech, cyberbullying, and the spread of hoaxes are increasingly rampant. This shows a gap between traditional ethics and the reality of behavior in the virtual world, which leads to a weakening of social capital and mutual trust among citizens. The erosion of mutual cooperation is also evident in urban communities in West Java, where modernity and urbanization have made individuals more preoccupied with their own affairs and reluctant to participate in community activities. Technology, which should facilitate social coordination, sometimes becomes an emotional barrier. For example, family members are often in the same room but remain isolated because they are busy with their gadgets. Without a conscious effort to revive the value of *sabilulungan* in a format that is adaptive to the digital era, the Sundanese people risk losing the collective strength that has been the backbone of their social stability.

The Sundanese language is not merely a means of communication, but a vessel for the entire value system and worldview of the Sundanese people. However, current data shows a significant decline in the use of the Sundanese language among teenagers and children. Regional languages are now marginalized by the national language and foreign languages, especially English, which is considered to have a more prestigious position and higher economic value in the professional and academic world. In many households in West Java, parents have begun to stop passing on Sundanese as their mother tongue to their children, fearing that it will hinder their mastery of Indonesian, which is the language of instruction in schools. This language crisis is also exacerbated by the complexity of the *undak-usuk basa* system, or levels of speech in Sundanese. The younger generation often feels afraid of making mistakes or being considered rude when speaking Sundanese, so they prefer to use Indonesian, which is considered more neutral and easier. In fact, *undak-usuk basa* contains profound teachings about ethics, respect, and compassion. When this language is abandoned, the moral values that accompany it also disappear from the collective memory of the younger generation.

The limited availability of digital teaching materials and entertainment content in Sundanese that is appealing to children is a major obstacle to preserving this language in the digital age. In the digital space, Sundanese often appears only as the subject of jokes or crude informal conversations, while its literary and formal aspects are increasingly rarely touched upon. Revitalization efforts through platforms such as *learningsundanese.com* attempt to fill this void by providing interactive learning materials, but the main challenge remains in building motivation and pride among native speakers themselves. Without a massive movement to “reverence” the Sundanese language in various areas of life, this language is threatened with extinction from everyday communication and will only remain as a linguistic artifact (Nurjanah et al., 2025). The erosion of Sundanese cultural identity is not only a matter of losing past traditions, but also a real threat to the social resilience and integrity of the Indonesian nation as a whole. Indonesia's national identity is built on a foundation of regional cultural diversity; if one of its main pillars, such as Sundanese culture, weakens, then national resilience will also be shaken. The weakening of nationalism among the younger generation often stems from a loss of pride in their local identity. When individuals no longer feel connected to the noble values of their nation, they become more susceptible to foreign ideologies that can undermine the unity and stability of the country.

Culture functions as a psychological and social defense system for society. Values such as mutual cooperation and mutual care are social capital that maintains solidarity among citizens in the face of crises. Without these values, society will become fragile and easily divided by conflicts of interest or horizontal conflicts. In addition, moral degradation resulting from the loss of traditional ethical guidelines can trigger various social problems, ranging from increased crime rates to family disintegration. In the context of increasingly competitive globalization, cultural integrity is a “compass” that provides direction for the progress of a nation without losing its identity. Digital transformation that is not accompanied by the strengthening of cultural character will create a generation that is

technologically savvy but spiritually and ethically empty. Therefore, strengthening cultural sovereignty in the digital age is a strategic necessity. Education must be able to produce a generation that is not only proficient in coding or data science, but also has integrity rooted in Sundanese local wisdom as a bulwark against the negative impacts of digital globalization.

Education in Preserving Sundanese Cultural Identity in the Digital Age

Education plays a very central role as a vehicle for internalizing values and shaping the character of the nation's future generations. Amidst the massive wave of digitalization, educational institutions are not merely places for transferring knowledge, but must also be spaces for cultivating cultural awareness and local identity. Schools have the authority to design systems that can bridge the values of the past with the demands of the present, without sacrificing cultural integrity. The function of education in cultural inheritance includes systematic efforts to introduce, instill a sense of love, and reactualize local wisdom in the daily lives of students.

The formation of culture-based character in schools cannot be done sporadically, but must be integrated into the entire educational ecosystem. This involves the curriculum, teaching methods, and the overall school culture. By making schools cultural laboratories, students are invited to see that Sundanese traditions are not just about dance or song, but about ethics, ways of thinking, and noble ways of socializing. This effort is crucial so that the younger generation does not become alienated from their own homeland due to the dominance of a uniform global cultural narrative.

The success of education in preserving cultural heritage also depends heavily on the active involvement of the wider community and the support of local government policies. Programs such as "Rebo Nyunda," which requires the use of the Sundanese language and traditional clothing in schools and offices, are examples of positive steps, but their substance must be strengthened through a deeper understanding of the philosophical material behind these symbols. Education must be able to prove that being a cultured Sundanese person is a cool and relevant identity in the modern era, so that a sense of pride (self-pride) grows, which becomes the energy for independent and sustainable cultural preservation efforts. One of the most fundamental philosophical concepts in Sundanese culture is Trisilas, which consists of silih asah, silih asih, and silih asuh. These values are not mere slogans, but principles of life that uphold harmony, humanity, and brotherhood. In the context of education, the integration of these values is highly relevant to shaping the character of students who have balanced intellectual, emotional, and social intelligence (Putri & Septyan, 2024).

Silih asah teaches the importance of lifelong learning and sharing knowledge, which is very much in line with the spirit of digital literacy and collaborative learning. Silih asih emphasizes the development of empathy, which is the antithesis of the violence and hatred that often prevail in the virtual world. Meanwhile, mutual nurturing guides individuals to have a sense of social responsibility in guiding others, both in the real world and on social media. The compatibility of these values with the Pancasila Student Profile shows that Sundanese local wisdom is a valid and strong source of values to support national character education (Purwanto, 2023). The integration of Trisila into the curriculum can be done through various subjects, such as Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) and Sundanese language local content. For example, the value of silih asih (mutual love) can be practiced through sharing and social care activities, while silih asah (mutual encouragement) can be implemented through mutually supportive group discussion methods. Through a deep understanding of this philosophy, students not only memorize theory, but learn to become individuals who are someah (friendly), humble, and highly social, which is the true identity of the Sundanese people (Miharja, 2022).

The Merdeka Curriculum embodies the spirit of flexibility and relevance, giving educational institutions ample space to develop learning programs tailored to the local context. The main instrument in this curriculum is the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), which provides a golden opportunity to strengthen local cultural identity in schools. Through the theme of "Local Wisdom," schools can design innovative projects that encourage students to explore and preserve the richness of Sundanese culture in a practical and contextual manner. A concrete example

of P5 implementation in West Java schools includes traditional food festivals or “Market Days,” where students learn to make and sell Sundanese culinary specialties such as *colenak*, *ombro*, and *putri noong*. In addition to culinary arts, P5 projects often feature traditional arts such as *angklung*, *jaipongan*, or *kaulanan urang lembur* (traditional games). These activities are very effective in balancing the influence of digital globalization, as they provide enjoyable hands-on experiences (edutainment) for students, allowing them to feel an emotional connection to their own culture.

Through P5, students are encouraged to become active subjects of learning, rather than mere consumers of information. They are trained to think critically in viewing cultural challenges in the digital age, to work together in organizing events, and to be creative in packaging traditions to make them appealing to their peers. Thus, P5 is not just an extracurricular activity, but a strategic instrument to ensure that Sundanese cultural identity remains alive and relevant in the hearts of Pancasila students in the digital age (Imania & Suprayitno, 2024). Although policy instruments such as the Merdeka Curriculum are already available, the implementation of culture-based education in the field faces very complex challenges. The dominance of global digital culture, which is consumed massively by students through their devices, is a major obstacle in fostering interest in local material. Students often feel that Sundanese cultural material in schools is too theoretical and has no direct connection to their fast-paced and modern digital world.

Limited digital and cultural competencies among teachers are also a significant inhibiting factor. Based on research, many elementary school teachers still lack the skills to use technology to create innovative learning media. In addition, there is a “generation gap” where teachers often find it difficult to understand how to communicate effectively with Generation Z and Alpha students who have different mindsets. Without intensive training and ongoing mentoring, efforts to digitize Sundanese language and culture teaching materials will only go so far. Another problem is the lack of quality digital teaching materials based on Sundanese local wisdom. Most learning resources are still conventional and generic, making them less able to stimulate students' curiosity in the multimedia era. Teachers also face the challenge of designing an education system that can bridge the gap between sacred traditional values and dynamic digital technology without destroying the essence of those values. Policy support from schools and the government is needed to provide adequate technological infrastructure and incentives for teachers who are innovative in developing digital cultural content.

Facing the challenges of the digital era, the world of education must be able to turn the threat of technology into an opportunity for cultural revitalization. The use of digital technology for the preservation of Sundanese culture can be done through the development of creative learning media, such as Sundanese language learning applications, traditional art tutorial videos, and gamification of folk tales. For example, the use of Virtual Reality (VR) or Augmented Reality (AR) technology can visualize traditional architecture or *jaipongan* dance interactively, which will certainly be more attractive to the younger generation than just reading textbooks. Another very important strategy is strengthening digital ethics rooted in Sundanese cultural values. The concept of *soméah hadé ka sémah* (being friendly and kind to guests/others) can be internalized as the basis of “netiquette” or internet ethics, which encourages polite, warm communication, free from hate speech. The value of *silih wawangi*, which means to mutually inspire or give positive energy, is also very relevant in countering cyberbullying and the spread of negative content on social media.

The revitalization of Sundanese language and literature can also be done through integrated digital platforms such as *learningsundanese.com*, which provides flexible access for anyone to learn the richness of the Sundanese language. In addition, creative methods such as LIGAS (Latihan Gancang Aksara Sunda) with the acronym KANAYA (Kelompokan, Nyanyikan, Ajak main, Yakinkan diri) prove that even complex cultural elements can be taught in a fun and effective way. By combining digital technology and an edutainment approach, education can revive young people's interest in their ancestral heritage while equipping them with future skills (NURJANAH & SRIHILMAWATI, 2025). The urgency to strengthen cultural identity through education is currently at a critical level. Education is no longer merely a complement, but rather the last bastion protecting society from the threat of

identity erosion that can destroy social and national order. Without serious strengthening efforts, the future generation of West Java is threatened with becoming a generation that is “alienated” from its own roots, losing its moral orientation and pride as citizens of the nation.

The formation of a digital generation rooted in local culture is a vision that must be achieved to ensure the sustainability of the Indonesian nation. This generation is one that is able to navigate the global sea of technology while still having a strong anchor in the noble values of Sundanese culture. Cultural sovereignty in the digital age can only be realized if each individual has the critical awareness to filter out external influences and the commitment to continue to preserve and develop their own cultural wealth. Therefore, culture-based educational transformation in the digital age requires commitment from all parties, from adaptive teachers and innovative curricula to supportive family environments. Success in preserving Sundanese cultural identity will inspire other regions in Indonesia to do the same. With strong synergy between technology, education, and local wisdom, Indonesia can embrace a golden future with a solid and dignified identity in the eyes of the world.

4. CONCLUSION

The massive development of digitalization has become an accelerating factor that erodes Sundanese cultural identity, particularly through global cultural homogenization, shifts in communication patterns, and the weakening use of language and local wisdom values among the younger generation. This condition confirms that cultural erosion is not merely a cultural issue, but a real threat to social resilience and national integrity. Therefore, education must be positioned as the front line in preserving and revitalizing Sundanese cultural identity in the digital age through the integration of local values into the curriculum, strengthening teacher competencies, and the creative and ethical use of digital technology. This effort requires continuous synergy between schools, families, communities, and the government so that Indonesia's digital generation grows up to be technologically savvy, well-rounded individuals with strong roots in their culture, because a great nation is one that is able to preserve and nurture its cultural identity amid changing times.

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