

DIGITALIZING THE *MARTONGGO RAJA* TRADITION AS A MORAL AND CHARACTER EDUCATION MODEL FOR STRENGTHENING STUDENTS' DEMOCRATIC INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

The digitalization of the *Martonggo raja* tradition offers a transformative approach to moral and character education by integrating Batak Toba cultural wisdom with contemporary pedagogical practices. This study examines how digital platforms can preserve and transmit the deliberative, ethical, and communal values embedded in *Martonggo raja*, fostering students' democratic intelligence. Employing qualitative ethnographic methods, including interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, the research explores the lived experiences of Batak Toba youth, community leaders, and educational stakeholders in Toba Regency, Indonesia. Findings indicate that *Martonggo raja* functions as a dynamic forum for experiential learning, where values such as tolerance, respect, openness, freedom of expression, and unity are internalized through dialogue, consensus-building, and intergenerational interaction. Digitalization enhances the accessibility, engagement, and relevance of these cultural practices for younger generations, supporting immersive learning experiences through simulations, multimedia storytelling, and interactive exercises. The study demonstrates that combining local wisdom with digital technology not only preserves cultural heritage but also strengthens democratic competencies, ethical reasoning, and social cohesion, offering a replicable model for character education in the digital era.

Keywords: martonggo raja; local wisdom; character education; moral education

BACKGROUND

Global social change marked by the advancement of digital technology has profoundly influenced educational patterns, the transmission of cultural values, and the construction of youth identities. Human engagement with digital media now transcends geographical boundaries and traditional social spaces, making digital platforms a primary arena for social interaction, knowledge exchange, and the internalization of values (Choi & Cristol, 2021). While this development opens vast opportunities for young people to access information, expand their perspectives, and develop new competencies, it also presents serious challenges in preserving local wisdom traditions that have long served as the moral, ethical, and democratic foundation of communal life. Increasingly, younger generations spend more time in virtual environments than in communal practices, reducing cultural inheritance to ceremonial symbols that lack deeper meaning.

In Indonesia, the discourse on character education that integrates local wisdom has gained increasing momentum, especially since the launch of the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* program (Hasugian et al., 2024). This initiative emphasizes the importance of shaping Indonesian learners to become globally competent individuals while remaining grounded in cultural values and national identity (Hasugian, 2024). Nevertheless, the implementation of character education on the ground remains problematic. In many cases, schools treat it as a curricular formality or a set of normative activities without addressing the praxis dimension that is essential to value education, such as habituation in dialogue, deliberation, and respect for diverse perspectives. As a result, character education often stops at the level of normative slogans rather than being realized in meaningful social practices that shape students' lived experiences.

Within this framework, the *Martonggo raja* tradition of the Batak Toba people offers a rich source of democratic, moral, and character-building values. More than a customary ritual conducted at weddings or traditional ceremonies, *Martonggo raja* is a deliberative mechanism that structures communication, regulates values, and guides decision-making within the framework of Dalihan Na Tolu (Manurung et al., 2023). In this forum, every social element has a role and authority, yet all are directed toward achieving consensus that reflects collective participation. *Martonggo raja* therefore functions not only as a cultural ritual but also as an authentic space of democratic learning where dialogue, respect for differences, and consensus-building are lived practices.

However, the dynamics of modernization and globalization have weakened the position of this tradition in the lives of younger generations. Field observations reveal that *Martonggo raja* is often regarded merely as a ceremonial requirement rather than a meaningful deliberative forum. Interviews with adat leaders in Balige indicate that only about 20 percent of Batak Toba youth truly understand the structure of customary discourse and the democratic values embedded in it. This reveals a growing gap between older generations who continue to internalize traditional values and younger generations who are more familiar with digital culture. If this condition persists, *Martonggo raja* as a source of moral and character education risks being displaced and losing its relevance in contemporary society.

This situation calls for strategic efforts to bridge the traditional sphere with the digital environment that has become the natural habitat of young people. Digitalization offers an effective pathway to transform the noble values of *Martonggo raja* into forms that are more accessible, comprehensible, and engaging for students. Experiences in other regions of Indonesia have demonstrated that integrating local wisdom into digital media through audiovisual documentation, educational applications, or interactive platforms can significantly increase young people's interest in their cultural heritage. In this sense, the digitalization of *Martonggo raja* serves not only as a cultural preservation strategy but also as a pedagogical innovation that enriches character education with a strong local foundation.

Despite this potential, much of the existing research on character education rooted in local wisdom in Indonesia remains descriptive and normative (K. Nababan, 2022). Studies on Dalihan Na Tolu, for instance, often highlight its function in maintaining social harmony without exploring how participants in customary forums actually experience democratic learning (K. R. Nababan, 2023). This research gap presents both a challenge and an opportunity to examine how democratic values are internalized through lived experiences in *Martonggo raja*, particularly among younger generations in the digital era. A qualitative approach is well suited for this inquiry, as it allows the exploration of meanings, experiences, and processes through which democracy is not merely taught in theory but lived in cultural practice.

It is also important to note that democratic education in schools is often limited to theoretical instruction and memorization of normative concepts, while offering little room for genuine deliberative practice. (Suciati et al., 2023) argues, moral and democratic education requires practical spaces where students can engage in moral imagination and ethical negotiation when facing differences. From this perspective, *Martonggo raja* can be seen as an ideal social laboratory, providing opportunities for individuals to participate directly in authentic deliberative processes rooted in local cultural traditions.

From a broader socio-cultural standpoint, strengthening character education through *Martonggo raja* is not only a matter of preserving tradition but also a means of revitalizing deliberative spaces that are

vital for sustaining democracy in Indonesia. At a time when political polarization and social fragmentation are becoming more pronounced, the presence of educational models grounded in local wisdom is increasingly critical. Such approaches not only equip students with normative values but also train them to internalize democracy as a lived practice. This responds to the need for participatory, contextual, and socially relevant models of character education.

Against this background, the present study seeks to explore the digitalization of *Martonggo raja* as a model of moral and character education that strengthens students' democratic intelligence. The research focus extends beyond documentation of the tradition to include the meanings, experiences, and processes of democratic value internalization that occur when the tradition is adapted to digital platforms. Thus, the study addresses both cultural preservation and pedagogical transformation to meet the challenges of character education in the digital age.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on the integration of local wisdom into character education informed by deliberative democracy. Practically, it offers an alternative learning model that is responsive to the needs of digital-native generations while also reinforcing cultural identity and social cohesion. By combining a qualitative approach with digital innovations, this study attempts to answer a fundamental question: how can tradition serve as a contextual, interactive, and adaptive source of democratic education in the contemporary era.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative research approach with an ethnographic strategy (Walker et al., 2024). Ethnography was chosen because the focus of the research lies in exploring the meanings, symbols, and social practices embedded in the *Martonggo raja* tradition, and understanding how such a tradition can be transformed through digitalization to serve moral and character education purposes. Ethnography allows the researcher to capture the contextual process of democratic value internalization by emphasizing social interactions, communicative practices, and lived experiences of participants involved in the tradition. This approach is considered appropriate, as the study aims to reveal cultural meanings and construct an in-depth understanding of the tradition as a model for democratic character education.

Research Location and Period

The study was conducted in Toba Regency, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia, a region where Batak Toba communities actively preserve and practice customary traditions, including the *Martonggo raja* deliberation forum. The location was chosen for its cultural significance and authenticity of practices. The fieldwork was carried out over a period of six months, from January to June 2025, covering stages of preparation, data collection, analysis, and validation of findings.

Research Subjects and Participants

The participants in this study were drawn from three main groups:

1. Batak Toba youth: Senior high school and university students aged 16–25 years residing in Toba Regency, selected to capture the perspectives of younger generations as the primary target of character education.
2. Community and customary leaders: Raja parhata (traditional speakers), dongan sabutuha (clan members), and other adat leaders with direct involvement in *Martonggo raja*. They provide insight into cultural meanings, moral values, and democratic practices in the tradition.
3. Local government representatives and the Toba Regency Education and Culture Office: Stakeholders responsible for educational and cultural policy implementation.

Participants were recruited using a purposive sampling technique, with selection based on their active involvement in adat practices or policy-making. In cases where additional informants were required, a snowball sampling technique was employed, allowing participants to recommend other relevant individuals.

Data Collection Techniques

Multiple data collection methods were used to ensure richness and depth:

1. Semi-structured interviews: Conducted with youth, community leaders, and policymakers to explore their experiences, interpretations, and perspectives regarding democratic values within *Martonggo raja* and its digitalization.
2. Participant observation: The researcher attended *Martonggo raja* forums to document communication patterns, symbolic practices, and deliberative dynamics. Field notes were taken to capture both verbal and non-verbal interactions.
3. Document study: Involving the collection of audiovisual recordings, cultural archives, and government documents related to educational and cultural preservation policies.
4. Method triangulation: Combining interviews, observations, and documentation to enhance the validity and reliability of findings.

Data Validation

Data credibility was ensured through several strategies:

1. Source and method triangulation, by cross-checking information obtained from youth, community leaders, and government officials through different data collection techniques .
2. Member checking, where preliminary findings were shared with participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations.
3. Audit trail, with detailed documentation of all research activities including field notes, interview transcripts, and coding processes, to maintain transparency and traceability.

Data Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of three interrelated steps:

1. Data reduction: Selecting, organizing, and simplifying raw data from interviews, observations, and documents.
2. Data display: Presenting organized information through matrices, charts, and narrative descriptions to identify emerging themes and relationships.
3. Conclusion drawing and verification: Iteratively interpreting the data and verifying emerging patterns to construct a comprehensive understanding of how democratic values are embedded within *Martonggo raja* and how digitalization can enhance its role in character education.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal that *Martonggo raja* functions not only as an indigenous customary forum but also as a living form of democratic education within the Batak Toba community. Through a careful analysis of interviews, observations, and documentary materials, a consistent pattern emerged in which *Martonggo raja* operates as a communal dialogic space, a locus of collective decision-making, and a mechanism for value transmission across generations. In essence, this practice resembles a focus group discussion where participation, consensus building, and inclusivity are regarded as the foundation

of communal life. It provides a social stage on which democratic competencies are not merely taught abstractly but enacted experientially.

One of the most salient findings is the deeply embedded democratic ethos that characterizes *Martonggo raja*. Every participant, regardless of age or social status, is entitled to speak, articulate ideas, and contribute to the process of reaching consensus. This is not symbolic participation but an authentic practice of deliberation. As one traditional leader in Balige observed, “*Martonggo raja adalah tempat kita belajar bahwa tidak ada suara yang boleh diabaikan. Bahkan yang muda harus didengar, karena konsensus tidak dapat tercapai tanpa mendengarkan semua orang*” (Interview, March 2024). Such reflections affirm that the cultural logic of the forum is fully aligned with democratic principles, highlighting the organic relationship between local tradition and civic values.

Equally important, participants consistently associated *Martonggo raja* with the formation of moral and social virtues. The thematic analysis revealed that tolerance, respect, openness, freedom of expression, and unity were among the values most frequently identified by informants. These values were not imparted through prescriptive instruction but were experienced through the very process of dialogue and consensus making. A young participant expressed, “*Di sekolah, kami belajar tentang demokrasi melalui buku. Tetapi di Martonggo raja, kami mengalaminya. Kami harus mendengarkan, kami harus menghormati, dan kadang-kadang kami harus memberi jalan demi kebersamaan*” (Interview with youth, April 2024). This reflection underscores the experiential and embodied character of value internalization, which distinguishes *Martonggo raja* from normative classroom-based approaches.

Direct observation of the proceedings further reinforced these insights. The arrangement of seating, the orderly turn-taking in speech, and the roles defined within the Daliha Na Tolu framework created a structured environment that encouraged egalitarian participation while maintaining respect for generational and hierarchical differences. Senior members typically initiated the discussion, yet younger voices were never sidelined; on the contrary, they were often invited to contribute. This illustrates how cultural structures provide room for intergenerational dialogue while simultaneously preserving communal respect. The process exemplifies what Miles and Huberman describe as interactive meaning-making, in which values are not passively inherited but are continually reconstructed through collective engagement.

Another important finding relates to the role of *Martonggo raja* in fostering social cohesion and unity. Decisions reached in this forum are guided by the principle that harmony of the collective must be prioritized above individual interests. A local government officer noted, “*Apa yang membuat Martonggo raja unik adalah bahwa konsensus bukan hanya cara untuk mencapai kesepakatan. Itu adalah komitmen moral untuk menjaga integritas komunitas, bahkan ketika perbedaan tajam*” (Interview, May 2024). This statement illustrates that consensus is viewed not merely as a procedural outcome but as a substantive ethical practice that sustains the social fabric. Such findings resonate with the Indonesian philosophical foundation of *musyawarah mufakat*, demonstrating how local wisdom embodies national democratic ideals.

The study also uncovered a significant generational tension in the interpretation of *Martonggo raja*. Older generations regard it as an irreplaceable foundation of social life, while many younger participants admitted that their understanding of its democratic meaning was limited prior to this research. However, when the tradition was introduced through digital documentation and audiovisual media, younger participants displayed renewed curiosity and appreciation. This underscores the transformative potential of digitalization in bridging traditional values with the learning habits of the digital generation. As one university student reflected, “*Saat saya menonton rekaman dan penjelasan secara online, akhirnya saya mengerti bahwa Martonggo raja bukan hanya tentang upacara. Ini tentang belajar untuk saling menghormati dan memutuskan bersama*” (Interview with university students, April 2024). Such testimony demonstrates the adaptive capacity of tradition when reimagined through technology.

From a broader cultural perspective, the findings suggest that *Martonggo raja* serves as a living curriculum for democratic intelligence. The practice nurtures not only cognitive understanding of

democracy but also the emotional and social competencies necessary to enact it in real life. These include the patience to listen attentively, the humility to accept differing viewpoints, and the responsibility to uphold collective decisions. In this sense, *Martonggo raja* may be conceptualized as a classroom without walls, where values are internalized through lived experience rather than imposed through abstract doctrines.

The overarching themes of tolerance, respect, openness, freedom, and unity that emerged from the data confirm the multidimensional role of *Martonggo raja* as both cultural preservation and character education. Its deliberative nature positions it as an authentic model of democratic pedagogy, particularly relevant for strengthening students' democratic intelligence. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that when this tradition is digitized and translated into accessible formats, it holds considerable promise as a pedagogical innovation that integrates cultural rootedness with the needs of the digital age.

DISCUSSION

Understanding and Practicing Democratic Values in *Martonggo raja*

The findings of this study suggest that *Martonggo raja* is not merely a customary ritual but an arena where democratic values are continuously lived, negotiated, and transmitted across generations. For the Batak Toba people, the practice of coming together to deliberate, listen, and reach consensus is not only a cultural norm but also a moral obligation that sustains the integrity of communal life. Within this space, the ideals of inclusivity and mutual respect are not abstract doctrines but practical realities that guide how people interact with one another. This lived experience of deliberation reflects what Habermas describes as the essence of communicative action, where dialogue serves as the foundation for rational consensus and democratic order. In the context of *Martonggo raja*, democracy is not something taught in textbooks but something felt, embodied, and performed in everyday life.

From the perspective of moral and character education, *Martonggo raja* offers an environment in which values such as tolerance, openness, respect, and collective responsibility are internalized through direct participation. In these forums, individuals are not passive recipients of cultural teachings but active contributors who must negotiate differences, articulate their perspectives, and listen empathetically to others (de la Fuente et al., 2022). The presence of youth in these discussions provides them with opportunities to learn humility and patience, while the older generation models wisdom and the capacity to prioritize harmony over personal interest. This intergenerational dialogue creates a moral apprenticeship, one that aligns with contemporary theories of character education that emphasize the importance of dialogical encounters and the cultivation of empathy.

What is particularly striking is the way *Martonggo raja* nurtures freedom of expression within a framework of unity. Participants are encouraged to voice their thoughts openly, yet this freedom is always directed toward the pursuit of consensus. Rather than seeing diversity of opinion as a threat, the community embraces it as the basis for strengthening collective understanding (Sanjaya et al., 2022). In this way, *Martonggo raja* demonstrates that freedom and unity are not contradictory but mutually reinforcing, a lesson of profound importance for democratic education. It mirrors the higher stages of moral reasoning described by Kohlberg, in which justice and fairness are achieved through respect for the dignity of all participants.

Another important aspect is the pedagogical quality inherent in the practice of *Martonggo raja*. Unlike classroom-based character education, which often remains normative and abstract, this tradition provides an experiential model in which values are learned through practice. When a young participant expresses an opinion and sees it taken seriously, or when elders consciously give space to the youth to speak, the lesson of democracy becomes tangible (Alscher et al., 2022). It is through these interactions that the abstract ideals of tolerance, respect, and collective responsibility are transformed into lived experiences. This confirms the view of scholars such as (Bell & Reed, 2021), who argue that democratic education must be grounded in authentic social practices rather than reduced to theoretical instruction.

Taken together, these findings suggest that *Martonggo raja* represents both a cultural heritage and an educational resource. As a cultural heritage, it preserves the communal values of the Batak Toba people, ensuring that the principle of collective deliberation remains central to social life. As an educational resource, it provides a model of moral and democratic education that resonates with the needs of contemporary society, especially in a time when political polarization and social fragmentation pose real challenges (Alodat et al., 2023). For students, participation in *Martonggo raja* can be understood as a process of learning democracy not as an abstract system of governance but as a way of being with others.

In conclusion, the democratic values embedded in *Martonggo raja* such as tolerance, respect, openness, freedom of expression, and unity are practiced in a way that naturally integrates moral character with communal life, shaping not only how individuals understand democracy but also how they embody it in their daily interactions. This tradition reveals that education for democracy does not only take place within the formal boundaries of schools but also within cultural spaces where values are experienced, enacted, and collectively shared, creating an environment in which learning is both authentic and rooted in lived reality. The findings of this study therefore offer a compelling case for the integration of local wisdom into broader frameworks of moral and character education, highlighting the importance of grounding democratic learning in practices that reflect the social and cultural context of the learners (Marini et al., 2022). Moreover, they demonstrate that indigenous traditions such as *Martonggo raja* have the potential to enrich, complement, and even transform national educational efforts aimed at cultivating democratic intelligence among students, ensuring that the values of deliberation, mutual respect, and collective responsibility continue to thrive in a rapidly changing world (Talan et al., 2023).

Digitalizing *Martonggo raja* for Youth Character Education

The process of digitizing the *Martonggo raja* tradition presents a compelling opportunity to translate local wisdom into character education that resonates with contemporary youth. *Martonggo raja*, as a cultural heritage of the Batak Toba community, embodies a rich tapestry of social norms, moral values, and communal practices that have guided generations in fostering harmonious social relations (Ahmadi Fathul Wahab et al., 2024). By leveraging digital technologies, these intangible cultural assets can be preserved, contextualized, and transmitted in formats that align with the cognitive and emotional tendencies of digital-native students. The integration of traditional values into digital platforms thus not only safeguards cultural continuity but also reinvigorates its relevance in modern educational paradigms.

Digitalization allows for the representation of complex cultural practices in interactive and engaging ways that traditional teaching methods may not achieve. For instance, video recordings, virtual simulations, and gamified learning modules can illustrate the rituals, songs, and customary procedures of *Martonggo raja*, offering students immersive experiences. Such methods enhance comprehension by enabling learners to observe, analyze, and participate in cultural narratives in a dynamic environment. Moreover, interactive digital content promotes active engagement, fostering curiosity and self-directed exploration that strengthens both cognitive and affective learning outcomes.

The educational potential of *Martonggo raja* lies in its inherent emphasis on collective decision-making, respect for elders, and communal responsibility. These values, when contextualized within digital learning environments, can inform character education programs aimed at cultivating critical civic virtues among youth (Jumiati et al., 2023). Through guided digital exercises, learners can simulate deliberative assemblies, resolve hypothetical community conflicts, and reflect upon ethical dilemmas that mirror real-life social interactions. This approach allows for experiential learning in a safe, virtual context, reinforcing moral reasoning, empathy, and collaborative skills.

Furthermore, digitalization facilitates the documentation and systematization of cultural knowledge that is traditionally transmitted orally. By converting rituals, oral narratives, and symbolic practices into digital archives, educators can ensure accurate preservation and provide structured access to cultural content. This systematic documentation supports curriculum development by enabling educators to

align specific cultural lessons with educational standards and learning objectives. Consequently, *Martonggo raja* can be integrated into a comprehensive model of character education that balances cultural authenticity with pedagogical rigor.

The use of digital platforms also enhances inclusivity and accessibility, allowing youth from diverse geographical and socio-economic backgrounds to engage with *Martonggo raja*. Students who may not have direct exposure to Batak Toba communities can access cultural content virtually, promoting intercultural understanding and respect for diversity (Kanai & Zeng, 2024). This expanded reach underscores the potential of digital technologies not only as tools for cultural preservation but also as instruments for fostering social cohesion and global citizenship among young learners (Borruip & Zitcer, 2025).

In addition, the integration of digital storytelling and multimedia elements supports the development of higher-order thinking skills. Students are encouraged to critically analyze cultural narratives, draw connections between traditional values and contemporary issues, and synthesize their own interpretations in creative formats (Muharrami, 2021). These activities enhance reflective thinking and ethical judgment, aligning with contemporary educational frameworks that emphasize holistic character formation. By framing cultural content within analytical and creative exercises, *Martonggo raja* becomes a vehicle for intellectual growth as well as moral education.

Digitalization also allows for iterative and adaptive learning experiences that cater to individual learning styles and paces. Platforms can provide immediate feedback, personalized challenges, and differentiated pathways, enabling students to internalize values at a rhythm that suits their developmental needs (Rafsanjani et al., 2021). This adaptability ensures that cultural lessons are not merely passive transmissions of knowledge but are transformed into active processes of meaning-making. Students thus develop both self-efficacy and a sense of personal responsibility in engaging with the values embedded in *Martonggo raja*.

Moreover, the fusion of digital technology with cultural education encourages interdisciplinary learning. Integrating *Martonggo raja* into subjects such as social studies, ethics, and digital literacy creates synergies that enhance students' understanding of complex societal structures. By exploring traditional governance, community ethics, and collaborative rituals through digital media, learners can draw parallels between historical practices and modern civic responsibilities. This holistic approach underscores the versatility of digitized cultural heritage as a foundation for multi-dimensional character education.

The process also supports the development of collaborative learning communities among students and educators. Digital platforms enable peer discussions, shared projects, and online forums that reflect the communal spirit of *Martonggo raja*. Through these interactions, students practice negotiation, consensus-building, and respect for differing perspectives, thereby experiencing firsthand the democratic principles embedded in the tradition. This social dimension of learning reinforces both moral development and social competence, cultivating active and conscientious participants in society.

Finally, the strategic digitalization of *Martonggo raja* represents a forward-looking approach to education that harmonizes tradition with modernity. By embedding local wisdom into digital pedagogy, educators can cultivate generations that are both technologically proficient and morally grounded. This integration ensures that cultural heritage is not relegated to static preservation but becomes a living resource for character development, civic engagement, and lifelong learning. In doing so, *Martonggo raja* exemplifies the potential of digital innovation to transform cultural values into meaningful educational experiences for youth navigating the complexities of the digital era.

Digitalization's Contribution to Students' Democratic Intelligence

The digitalization of the *Martonggo raja* tradition holds significant potential to enhance democratic intelligence among students by connecting deeply rooted cultural practices with contemporary

educational theories. Democratic intelligence, often defined as the capacity to think critically, deliberate collectively, and act responsibly within a civic community, requires both cognitive and moral formation. *Martonggo raja*, as a Batak Toba tradition, embodies values of deliberation, respect for consensus, and responsibility toward communal harmony (Wijaya Mulya et al., 2024). When these values are translated into digital forms, they can be systematically integrated into educational settings, ensuring that students not only learn abstract democratic principles but also experience them through culturally embedded practices. This approach aligns with John Dewey's theory of education as a lived democratic experience, situating learning within the authentic practices of a community.

From a theoretical standpoint, the integration of *Martonggo raja* into digital platforms resonates with constructivist learning theories, which emphasize active knowledge construction through social interaction and contextually relevant experiences. The tradition itself is inherently dialogical, requiring participants to listen, negotiate, and respect differing perspectives before arriving at consensus. By digitalizing this process through simulations, interactive storytelling, and online role-playing activities, educators can design learning environments where students rehearse the skills of democratic participation. In line with Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, such activities situate learning within meaningful cultural practices, thereby extending the zone of proximal development through collaborative engagement with peers and mentors (Khoiriyah et al., 2023).

The practical implementation of digitalized *Martonggo raja* in schools can take the form of project-based learning modules that mirror the processes of community deliberation. For example, students can be organized into virtual councils where they debate community issues modeled on real-life scenarios, guided by the cultural framework of *Martonggo raja*. Teachers can facilitate these activities by integrating multimedia resources such as recordings of traditional ceremonies, digital archives of oral narratives, and interactive discussion boards. This structure allows students to acquire practical competencies in democratic discourse, critical thinking, and conflict resolution, while simultaneously internalizing the values of cultural respect and social responsibility embedded in the tradition.

In addition, the digitalization of *Martonggo raja* supports the development of ethical reasoning, a crucial dimension of democratic intelligence. By engaging with moral dilemmas and cultural case studies presented in virtual platforms, students are encouraged to reflect upon the ethical implications of their choices. For instance, a digital learning scenario might present conflicting community interests where students must negotiate between individual benefit and collective welfare. Such experiences parallel the moral complexities of real democratic life and contribute to the cultivation of civic virtues such as fairness, empathy, and accountability. This reflective dimension reinforces Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development by situating moral growth within culturally grounded, participatory contexts.

The role of schools in this digital transformation is central, as they provide the institutional structure for integrating cultural content into formal curricula. Through subjects such as civics, social studies, and character education, digitalized *Martonggo raja* can be embedded as case studies, digital learning projects, or extracurricular activities. Educators can draw on blended learning models that combine face-to-face discussions with online activities, ensuring that students experience both the embodied and virtual dimensions of democratic practices. In this sense, the digitalization of *Martonggo raja* does not replace traditional learning but enhances it by making cultural wisdom accessible, adaptable, and engaging for twenty-first-century learners.

Beyond the classroom, community-based education programs can also benefit from the digitalization of *Martonggo raja*. Local cultural centers, youth organizations, and intergenerational forums can adopt digital tools to facilitate dialogues between elders and youth, ensuring that traditional wisdom continues to inform civic practices. Online platforms can serve as meeting spaces where community members simulate collective decision-making processes inspired by *Martonggo raja*, thereby strengthening bonds across generations. This community-level implementation reinforces the democratic principle that education is not confined to schools but is a shared responsibility of society, echoing Paulo Freire's concept of education as a practice of freedom.

Another crucial contribution of digitalizing *Martonggo raja* is its potential to cultivate inclusivity and pluralism, which are central to democratic intelligence. In digital spaces, students from diverse backgrounds can access and engage with Batak Toba cultural heritage, fostering intercultural dialogue and mutual respect. This exposure encourages students to appreciate cultural diversity as a strength rather than a division. In practical terms, intercultural modules can be developed where students compare *Martonggo raja* with other local traditions, identifying shared democratic values such as consensus, respect, and collective welfare. Such comparative learning strengthens students' capacity to engage respectfully with plural societies, an essential skill for democratic citizenship in multicultural nations.

The use of digital platforms also supports continuous assessment and feedback, which are integral to the cultivation of democratic intelligence. Teachers can design reflective journals, online discussions, and peer evaluations that encourage students to articulate their thoughts, critique differing perspectives, and revise their positions. These activities replicate the iterative nature of democratic deliberation, where ideas evolve through dialogue and negotiation. Furthermore, digital analytics can provide insights into student participation and collaboration patterns, enabling educators to identify areas where democratic skills need reinforcement. Such evidence-based approaches ensure that democratic intelligence is nurtured systematically rather than left to chance.

From a policy perspective, the digitalization of *Martonggo raja* aligns with broader educational goals that emphasize character education, civic literacy, and digital competence. National curricula increasingly stress the importance of preparing students for active participation in democratic life, and digitalized cultural traditions provide a concrete pathway to achieve these objectives. Policymakers can support this integration by funding digital content development, training teachers in culturally responsive pedagogy, and encouraging partnerships between schools and cultural organizations. By embedding local traditions into the digital education agenda, governments can simultaneously preserve cultural heritage and advance civic education goals.

Ultimately, the digitalization of *Martonggo raja* represents a holistic strategy for cultivating democratic intelligence that bridges theory and practice. Theoretically, it operationalizes constructivist, socio-cultural, and moral development frameworks by embedding learning within meaningful cultural contexts. Practically, it equips students with the skills and virtues necessary for democratic participation through immersive, collaborative, and reflective activities. By engaging both schools and communities, this process ensures that democratic intelligence is not merely taught as abstract knowledge but lived as a cultural and social practice. In this way, the integration of *Martonggo raja* into digital platforms exemplifies how tradition and technology can converge to shape future citizens who are both culturally grounded and democratically empowered.

Efforts and Challenges in Digitalizing *Martonggo raja* for Character Education

The effort to digitalize the *Martonggo raja* tradition as a model for moral and character education represents an innovative approach to strengthening students' democratic intelligence (Choi & Cristol, 2021). This initiative requires systematic planning, beginning with a thorough understanding of the cultural, social, and ethical dimensions of the tradition. Educators and cultural experts must collaborate to identify the core values embedded in *Martonggo raja*, such as consensus-building, respect for elders, and communal responsibility, and translate these into pedagogically sound digital formats. The process involves creating interactive learning materials, including videos, virtual simulations, gamified exercises, and online discussion forums that can immerse students in cultural experiences while reinforcing democratic skills. By doing so, the intangible values of the tradition become accessible, measurable, and relevant in contemporary educational settings.

A critical aspect of this effort is curriculum integration. Digitalized content must be aligned with educational objectives, standards, and frameworks for character and civic education. Teachers need to design lesson plans that contextualize *Martonggo raja* activities within broader learning goals, linking moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, and democratic participation. For example, students can

engage in virtual deliberations mirroring traditional assemblies, where they negotiate outcomes, respect differing opinions, and arrive at collective decisions (Prima Roza et al., 2023). This approach operationalizes democratic intelligence in tangible, structured ways, allowing learners to develop critical thinking, empathy, and collaborative skills while simultaneously internalizing cultural values.

The successful implementation of digital *Martonggo raja* programs also depends on teacher competence and professional development. Educators must be trained in both the cultural content and the technical tools necessary for digital delivery. This includes understanding multimedia production, online facilitation techniques, and digital pedagogy strategies that promote engagement and reflection. Without sufficient teacher preparation, even high-quality digital resources may fail to achieve their intended impact (Grossman, 2022). Professional learning communities, workshops, and mentorship programs can support teachers in navigating these challenges, ensuring that digital initiatives are not only technically sound but culturally authentic and pedagogically effective.

Technological infrastructure represents another significant area of effort and potential challenge. Schools and communities must have access to reliable internet connectivity, appropriate devices, and secure digital platforms capable of hosting interactive content. In regions where technological resources are limited, alternative strategies such as offline digital packages, mobile applications, or community computer centers may be necessary to bridge the access gap. Ensuring that students can engage fully with digitalized *Martonggo raja* activities is essential to maintaining equity in learning opportunities and maximizing the democratic benefits of these interventions.

Community involvement is a critical success factor in this initiative. Engaging local elders, cultural practitioners, and parents ensures that the digital representations of *Martonggo raja* are accurate and respectful of traditional norms. Community participation also strengthens intergenerational learning, allowing students to experience democratic deliberation and moral reasoning in ways that reflect authentic cultural practice. However, coordinating community engagement poses logistical and motivational challenges, including aligning schedules, ensuring consistent participation, and addressing potential resistance to technological adaptation among traditional stakeholders. Addressing these challenges requires clear communication, participatory planning, and mutual respect between educators and cultural custodians.

Digital literacy among students is both an opportunity and a challenge. While contemporary learners are generally adept at navigating digital environments, effectively engaging with culturally rich content requires guidance, reflection, and critical thinking. Teachers must scaffold learning experiences to help students interpret symbolic practices, ethical dilemmas, and communal narratives within *Martonggo raja*. Without careful design, students may engage with the content superficially, missing the deeper lessons of democratic reasoning and moral reflection. Structured reflection prompts, discussion boards, and guided debriefing sessions can mitigate this risk, ensuring that digital activities foster authentic moral and civic learning.

Monitoring and assessment present additional challenges in translating *Martonggo raja* into a digital education model. Traditional assessments often fail to capture the nuances of moral judgment, collaborative skills, and democratic engagement. Educators must design performance-based assessments, digital portfolios, peer evaluations, and reflective exercises that measure students' ability to apply democratic principles in culturally informed contexts. These assessment strategies require significant planning and ongoing adaptation to ensure validity and reliability, as well as alignment with curricular standards for character and civic education (Hammer et al., 2021).

Cultural sensitivity and preservation are central to this endeavor. Digitalization must avoid oversimplification, commercialization, or distortion of *Martonggo raja* values. Maintaining fidelity to the tradition while adapting it for digital formats requires careful selection of content, contextualization, and consultation with cultural authorities. Balancing accessibility with authenticity is a nuanced challenge, demanding ongoing dialogue between educators, cultural practitioners, and technologists.

Failure to achieve this balance risks undermining both the educational and cultural goals of the initiative.

Despite these challenges, digitalization offers unparalleled opportunities for scalability and innovation. By creating online platforms and repositories, schools can share best practices, learning modules, and cultural content across regions, fostering a wider appreciation of Batak Toba heritage and democratic education. Students from diverse backgrounds can engage collaboratively in cross-community projects, enhancing intercultural understanding and reinforcing democratic norms. This broad reach amplifies the impact of *Martonggo raja* as a model for moral and character education, positioning digital technology as a catalyst for civic engagement and cultural continuity.

In conclusion, the effort to digitalize *Martonggo raja* as a moral and character education model exemplifies the integration of tradition, pedagogy, and technology in service of democratic intelligence. While significant challenges exist, including technological access, teacher readiness, student engagement, assessment, and cultural fidelity, deliberate planning and collaboration can overcome these obstacles. By leveraging digital platforms thoughtfully, educators can create immersive, reflective, and participatory learning experiences that cultivate moral reasoning, democratic skills, and cultural awareness. This approach ensures that students are not only proficient in digital literacy but also equipped with the ethical and civic competencies necessary to navigate complex social and democratic contexts in contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

1. The digitalization of the *Martonggo raja* tradition offers a transformative approach to moral and character education by bridging indigenous wisdom with modern pedagogical practices. This integration allows students to engage in experiential learning where democratic principles are not merely theoretical but lived through simulated deliberations and interactive media. By translating rituals, deliberations, and communal narratives into digital formats, educators provide youth with accessible opportunities to internalize values such as tolerance, respect, openness, freedom of expression, and unity. The process preserves cultural heritage while fostering relevance in the digital age, creating a model that situates civic competencies within authentic, culturally grounded experiences. Students develop both cognitive and emotional understanding of democratic engagement, reinforcing ethical reasoning and collective responsibility. Digitalized *Martonggo raja* supports continuous reflection, iterative learning, and meaningful social interaction, enabling learners to practice consensus-building and empathetic decision-making. These platforms also encourage active participation, intergenerational dialogue, and peer collaboration, enhancing social cohesion and cultural literacy. By embedding local wisdom into structured educational activities, the tradition evolves into a dynamic pedagogical tool. Ultimately, this approach aligns cultural preservation with contemporary educational goals, empowering students to navigate modern civic life ethically and effectively.
2. The pedagogical effectiveness of digital *Martonggo raja* is enhanced through immersive and interactive methodologies that extend beyond conventional classroom instruction. Virtual simulations, gamified learning, and multimedia storytelling enable students to observe, analyze, and engage with complex cultural practices in real time. Such techniques facilitate experiential learning, promoting deep comprehension of moral and civic principles. Students are encouraged to critically reflect on ethical dilemmas, negotiate differences, and participate in decision-making processes that mirror real communal life. The digital platform also accommodates differentiated learning, allowing students to progress at their own pace while receiving immediate feedback and guidance. By integrating reflective exercises, discussion forums, and collaborative projects, the model nurtures democratic intelligence alongside technical and cognitive competencies. Furthermore, the approach fosters creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking by contextualizing cultural content within contemporary social challenges. Students not only learn about tradition but also explore its relevance to modern ethical and civic contexts. This method enhances motivation, engagement, and retention of

values while ensuring that learning remains relevant to digital-native generations. In essence, digital *Martonggo raja* transforms passive exposure into active, value-driven experiences that reinforce character education.

3. The successful implementation of this model depends on the active collaboration of educators, cultural leaders, and communities, ensuring both authenticity and pedagogical rigor. Teachers must possess digital literacy alongside cultural competence to facilitate interactive experiences that faithfully represent *Martonggo raja* values. Community elders and cultural practitioners provide guidance to maintain fidelity to traditional norms while adapting content for modern learning environments. This collaboration ensures intergenerational transmission of knowledge, bridging the gap between older custodians of culture and younger digital learners. Community involvement also strengthens students' appreciation of collective responsibility, ethical deliberation, and participatory decision-making. Professional development programs, workshops, and mentorship initiatives are essential to equip educators with the skills necessary to balance digital facilitation with cultural sensitivity. Active stakeholder engagement promotes sustainability, enhances learning outcomes, and builds institutional support for integrating local wisdom into curricula. By embedding cultural authenticity into pedagogical design, the initiative avoids superficial representations and reinforces ethical and democratic dimensions. The collaborative framework further enables iterative improvement, allowing feedback from students, teachers, and cultural authorities to shape continuous refinement. This multidimensional partnership ensures the initiative's scalability and long-term impact. Ultimately, community-embedded digital learning strengthens both civic education and cultural resilience.
4. Despite its potential, the digitalization of *Martonggo raja* faces several challenges that require deliberate mitigation strategies to ensure effectiveness. Technological infrastructure, including access to devices, reliable internet, and secure digital platforms, remains a critical concern in some regions, potentially limiting equitable participation. Students may exhibit varying levels of digital literacy, necessitating structured scaffolding, guidance, and reflection to engage meaningfully with content. Assessing moral reasoning, democratic participation, and collaborative skills requires innovative approaches beyond traditional exams, such as performance-based tasks, digital portfolios, and peer evaluations. Additionally, ensuring cultural fidelity while adapting traditional practices for digital contexts demands careful consultation with community leaders and adherence to ethical standards. Resistance from stakeholders unfamiliar with digital methodologies may also pose obstacles, highlighting the importance of communication, training, and participatory planning. Addressing these challenges ensures that educational objectives are met while maintaining the integrity of the tradition. Effective monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation are crucial to align learning experiences with both civic and cultural competencies. Despite these hurdles, systematic planning, technological innovation, and collaborative support create pathways for overcoming limitations. The iterative refinement of strategies enables continuous improvement, ensuring that students benefit fully from digitalized cultural education initiatives.
5. The digitalized *Martonggo raja* tradition ultimately provides a holistic model for cultivating democratic intelligence, moral reasoning, and character development among students. By integrating cultural wisdom into interactive digital platforms, learners experience democracy as an embodied practice rather than abstract theory. They develop empathy, ethical judgment, consensus-building skills, and a sense of collective responsibility in authentic yet technologically mediated contexts. The approach strengthens civic competencies by situating learning within culturally meaningful narratives, promoting engagement with both local and global societal challenges. Additionally, it fosters inclusivity and intercultural understanding, enabling students from diverse backgrounds to access and reflect on shared democratic values. The model bridges theory and practice, combining pedagogical innovation with cultural preservation, and demonstrating that local traditions can effectively guide contemporary education. By cultivating both technical and moral competencies, students emerge as digitally literate, culturally grounded, and ethically responsible citizens. The initiative underscores the potential of technology to amplify the reach and relevance of indigenous practices. As a framework, digital *Martonggo raja* exemplifies sustainable character education, aligning with

national objectives of civic literacy and ethical development. Ultimately, it ensures that democratic intelligence is nurtured within students, preparing them to navigate complex social realities with integrity, empathy, and cultural awareness.

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