



Humility in Learning from Al-Kahf 66 for Solution Students' Moral Crisis in the Digital Era

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Abstract

The digital era has brought extraordinary ease in accessing information and knowledge. However, this convenience has also given rise to new moral challenges among students, such as intellectual arrogance, declining learning ethics, and reduced respect for teachers. This study aims to examine Qur'an Surah Al Kahf verse 66 through the approach of Uloom-al Qur'an, analyze the value of humility in seeking knowledge based on classical and contemporary tafsir, and formulate its relevance as a solution to students' moral crisis in the digital era. This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method by analyzing various classical and contemporary tafsir literature, particularly Tafsir Ibn Kathir and Tafsir Al Misbah. The findings show that the dialogue between Prophet Musa and Prophet Khidir in Qur'an Al Kahf verse 66 illustrates the importance of humility in the learning process, where even a person of high knowledge demonstrates humility to acquire understanding. This value of humility can be implemented to reduce arrogant behavior, strengthen respect toward teachers, and cultivate sincerity in learning. Thus, humility becomes an ethical and spiritual foundation relevant for building students' character in the digital era.

Keywords: Al Kahf; Digital Era; Humility; Moral Crisis

Abstrak

Era digital telah membawa kemudahan yang luar biasa dalam mengakses informasi dan pengetahuan. Namun, kemudahan ini juga memunculkan tantangan moral baru di kalangan siswa, seperti kesombongan intelektual, menurunnya etika belajar, dan berkurangnya rasa hormat kepada guru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji Surah Al-Kahfi ayat 66 melalui pendekatan Uloomul Qur'an, menganalisis nilai kerendahan hati dalam mencari ilmu berdasarkan tafsir klasik dan kontemporer, serta merumuskan relevansinya sebagai solusi terhadap krisis moral siswa di era digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode library research melalui analisis berbagai literatur tafsir klasik dan kontemporer, khususnya Tafsir Ibn Katsir dan Tafsir Al Misbah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dialog antara Nabi Musa dan Nabi Khidir dalam Surah Al-Kahfi ayat 66 menggambarkan pentingnya sikap rendah hati dalam proses pembelajaran, di mana bahkan seseorang yang memiliki pengetahuan tinggi tetap menunjukkan kerendahan hati untuk memperoleh pemahaman. Nilai kerendahan hati ini dapat diimplementasikan untuk mengurangi perilaku arogan, memperkuat rasa hormat kepada guru, serta menumbuhkan keikhlasan dalam belajar. Dengan demikian, kerendahan hati menjadi landasan etis dan spiritual yang relevan dalam membangun karakter siswa di era digital.

Kata kunci: Al Kahf; Era Digital; Kerendahan Hati; Krisis Moral

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Introduction

The digital era has facilitated access to knowledge, including for students at the elementary and secondary levels (Dito & Pujiastuti, 2021). Information can be obtained quickly through the internet; however, this convenience also creates new challenges. Students often feel sufficiently knowledgeable simply by browsing the online world, which leads to a diminished appreciation for the role of teachers, a preference for an instant culture, and even involvement in plagiarism practices (Anggraini et al., 2022). This is reinforced by literature stating that digitalization exacerbates tendencies toward academic plagiarism because information is widely accessible without being balanced by ethical awareness (Leaton Gray et al., 2025). Other studies also emphasize that the phenomenon of moral crisis is increasingly evident in the form of declining politeness, the erosion of learning ethics, and tendencies toward intellectual exhibitionism (Blau et al., 2021). Meanwhile, Alhamuddin et al. (2025) assert that weak academic ethics in the digital era has implications for declining integrity, honesty, and scholarly *adab* among students, thus requiring the strengthening of moral and spiritual values based on Islamic teachings as a foundation for character education. These conditions indicate the weakening of moral values among young people as access to technology and social media continues to expand rapidly.

To date, studies focusing on humility in seeking knowledge generally remain within the framework of Islamic education that emphasizes the importance of *adab* as a prerequisite for the blessing of knowledge. One study affirms that humility is a fundamental foundation so that the knowledge acquired does not lead to arrogance but instead brings benefits to oneself and the surrounding environment (Septiana, 2021). In addition, Quraish Shihab explains that the story of Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) learning from Prophet Khidir in Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 represents an enduring example of humility in seeking knowledge, even when one holds a high status as a prophet and messenger (Shihab, 2002). However, most previous studies still position the value of *tawadu'* within a normative context and have not explicitly connected it with contemporary educational challenges. Based on the existing literature, there remains a research gap concerning learner etiquette that specifically examines Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 as a solution to the moral crisis of students in the digital era, such as intellectual arrogance, instant culture, and declining respect for teachers.

The urgency of this study arises from the gap between the increasing number of studies discussing the moral crisis of students in the digital era and the limited research

that specifically examines humility in seeking knowledge based on particular Qur'anic verses. Although various studies have explored the educational and moral values contained in the story of Prophet Musa and Khidr in Q.S. Al Kahf verses 60–82, such as humility, patience, and respect toward teachers in the learning process (Fauziah et al., 2019; Mufid & Chailani, 2024; Nurhasanah et al., 2018), these studies generally analyze the narrative as a whole or focus on general Islamic educational values. However, no study has specifically positioned Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 as the primary foundation for ethical solutions in seeking knowledge, particularly in addressing the moral crisis of students in the digital era. This study aims to examine Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 through the Ulum-al Qur'an approach to uncover the structure, context, and depth of meaning of the verse. Furthermore, this study analyzes the value of humility in seeking knowledge reflected in Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 concerning the attitude of Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) when learning from Prophet Khidir (peace be upon him), based on both classical and contemporary exegetical analyses to obtain a comprehensive understanding. From this exegetical review, the study formulates a conceptual framework of humility in seeking knowledge that is relevant for responding to and addressing the moral crisis among students in the digital era. The novelty of this research lies in contextualizing the value of *tawadu'* contained in Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 with the realities of education in the digital era, which has largely been discussed only in normative terms. This study aims to examine how humility in seeking knowledge from the perspective of Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 can serve as a solution to addressing the moral crisis of students in their pursuit of knowledge amid the influences of the digital era.

The argument of this study is based on the view that students' moral character is shaped not only by visible environmental factors but also by the invisible digital environment. For example, one study reveals that the moral crisis among adolescents is influenced by various factors, including technological deviations as one of the causes (Hudi et al., 2024). Another study highlights how uncontrolled use of gadgets and social media can damage students' manners and ethics, as students tend to neglect proper etiquette in interactions due to unrestricted exposure to digital media (Pratiwi, 2024). In line with this, other research notes that the digital era has shifted teacher student interactions so that etiquette in seeking knowledge is often neglected (Meitsa Mona et al., 2025). Additional studies also confirm that excessive exposure to social media can increase selfish tendencies and instant gratification among adolescents (Luthfi et al., 2024). Therefore, this study aims to examine the value of humility in seeking knowledge

from the perspective of Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 and to analyze its relevance as a conceptual solution to addressing the moral crisis of students in the digital era.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method with a descriptive-analytical design. Data collection was conducted by examining and analyzing various written sources relevant to the research focus (Adlini et al., 2022). This approach was selected because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the value of humility (*tawadu'*) in seeking knowledge based on Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 through an analysis of the Qur'anic text and exegetical literature, as well as to relate it to the phenomenon of students' moral crisis in the digital era. The research was carried out during the period of September to October 2025. Research activities involved searching for and reviewing literature from various sources, including both physical and digital libraries. Online sources included national and international academic journal databases, university repositories, and digital platforms providing tafsir works and Islamic scholarly literature.

The focus of this research is the values of humility in seeking knowledge contained in Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66. The research subjects consist of the Qur'anic text, classical and contemporary tafsir works, and scholarly literature discussing the ethics of seeking knowledge and the moral crisis among students. The selection of subjects was conducted purposively by choosing sources that are relevant, authoritative, and directly related to the focus of the study. The research data consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data include the Qur'anic text of Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 and major exegetical works such as Tafsir Ibn Kathir and Tafsir Al Misbah. Secondary data consist of journal articles, academic books, and previous studies addressing Islamic education, the ethics of seeking knowledge, and moral challenges in the digital era.

Data were collected using documentation techniques by inventorying and reviewing relevant written sources. This process included searching printed and online literature, conducting critical readings of the Qur'anic text and tafsir, and compiling previous research that supports the analysis of contemporary social and educational contexts. Data analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques, which involved stages of data identification, thematic categorization, and interpretation of meaning. The verse Q.S. Al Kahf 66 was analyzed to explore the moral messages and educational values contained within it and then compared with interpretations from

classical and contemporary exegetes. The findings were subsequently contextualized within the conditions of education in the digital era to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the relevance of humility in seeking knowledge as a solution to the moral crisis among students.

Result and Discussion

Study of Ulum-al Qur'an on Q.S. Al Kahf Verse 66

Surah Al Kahf consists of 110 verses and is classified as a Makkiyah chapter. It was revealed after Surah Al Ghashiyah and contains many stories full of wisdom, one of which is the account of the meeting between Prophet Musa and Prophet Khidir. This story provides valuable lessons on how a seeker of knowledge should behave toward a teacher with respect, patience, and humility. The verse states: (Tim Penyempurnaan Terjemahan Al-Qur'an, 2019)

قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ هَلْ أَتَيْتُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِي مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ رُشْدًا

Musa said to Khidir with humility, asking permission to accompany him so that he might learn from the knowledge that Allah had taught Khidir. (Q.S. Al Kahf (18): 66).

In Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 there is a clear thematic connection with the surrounding verses. This verse remains part of the narrative of the encounter between Prophet Musa and Prophet Khidir. Verse 65 explains that Allah granted mercy and special knowledge to a righteous servant, namely Khidir. Verse 66 then portrays the response of Prophet Musa, who respectfully requests permission to follow Khidir in order to learn from him. Subsequently, in verse 67 Khidir responds by reminding Musa that he may not be able to remain patient with what he will witness during the learning process. Thus, verse 66 functions as a bridge between the explanation of Khidir's special knowledge in verse 65 and the tests of patience described in verses 67 and 68. This continuity demonstrates a coherent narrative flow from the introduction of a knowledgeable figure to the sincere intention to learn and finally to the challenges inherent in seeking knowledge.

According to some scholarly accounts, the revelation of Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 is related to an incident involving Prophet Musa when he was asked who was the most knowledgeable person on earth. After delivering a sermon to his people, Musa was asked by a young man about the most knowledgeable human being. Without intending arrogance, he replied that he was the most knowledgeable. Allah then admonished him and informed him that there was a servant endowed with greater knowledge. Motivated

by curiosity, Musa sought to meet this person. Allah guided him to the meeting point of the two seas, where he would encounter the intended figure. There, Musa was instructed to learn and seek knowledge from him. This encounter led to a profound scholarly dialogue and educational interaction between Prophet Musa and the righteous and knowledgeable servant of Allah, namely Khidir (Admin, 2020).

As explained earlier, the *asbab al nuzul* of this verse is closely related to the preceding verses that narrate the story of the Companions of the Cave. The account of Prophet Musa and Khidir was conveyed to strengthen the response of Prophet Muhammad to the Jews and the disbelievers of Mecca who questioned him about the story of the Companions of the Cave. Although they did not directly inquire about the story of Musa, Allah still revealed it as reinforcement and completion of the response. The mention of the story of Musa after the narrative of the Companions of the Cave emphasizes that humility is superior to arrogance, even for someone possessing great knowledge, as demonstrated by Prophet Musa who was willing to learn from Khidir (Abidin, 2021).

The Value of Humility in Seeking Knowledge from the Perspective of Q.S. Al Kahf Verse 66

Linguistically, the term humility derives from the Arabic word *tawadu`* (تواضع) which means to lower oneself or to display modesty. This attitude implies not highlighting one's advantages, whether related to power, status, position, beauty, or other attributes of honor. *Tawadu`* is understood as an attitude of humility before Allah, His Messenger, and fellow human beings, even when a person in reality possesses certain strengths, advantages, or social standing (Nasirudin, 2022).

Terminologically, *tawadu`* refers to humility and stands in contrast to arrogance or pride. Al Ghazali interprets *tawadu`* as a person's willingness to relinquish egocentric tendencies and to regard others as more worthy than oneself (Ghazali, 1995). Meanwhile, Ahmad Athaillah views *tawadu`* as an attitude that arises from awareness of the greatness of Allah and the unveiling of His majestic attributes (Athaillah, 2006). Based on these definitions, *tawadu`* can be understood as behavior that reflects modesty, avoids arrogance, and refrains from self-glorification, thereby preventing attitudes of pride, conceit, or feelings of superiority over others.

In the context of Islamic education, humility is interpreted as an attitude of respecting knowledge, honoring teachers, and valuing the learning process, while recognizing that human knowledge represents only a small portion of the knowledge of

Allah. Al Ghazali in *Ihya Ulum al Din* explains that a seeker of knowledge must abandon arrogance, for knowledge will not enter a heart filled with pride. Humility thus becomes a condition for the acceptance of knowledge and a cause of blessing in learning (Ghazali, 2009).

Within this framework, the concept of humility in seeking knowledge finds a strong theological foundation in the Qur'an, particularly in Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66, which records the dialogue between Prophet Musa and Prophet Khidir. In *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, it is explained that Musa said to Khidir, "May I follow you so that you teach me some of what Allah has taught you, so that I may gain understanding?" This expression reflects Musa's readiness to position himself as a learner and his acknowledgment of the limitations of his own knowledge. (Katsir, 2004) He hoped that the knowledge possessed by his teacher would be explained to him until he truly understood, exemplifying the sincerity of a genuine seeker of knowledge .

The verse emphasizes that the dialogue between Musa and Khidir is not merely a request to accompany a journey but also an acknowledgment of another person's intellectual superiority and a manifestation of humility before a teacher. Although Musa was a noble prophet with a high status, he still demonstrated humility by recognizing that there remained knowledge he did not possess. His willingness to learn from Khidir affirms that humility is a key to opening the doors of knowledge that bring blessing.

From the perspective of Ibn Kathir, this verse teaches that humility is a prerequisite for the reception of knowledge, as knowledge does not enter a heart that is arrogant or self-satisfied (Aulia & Arif, 2025). In the modern context, this teaching is relevant to students in the digital era who often feel sufficiently knowledgeable by relying on technology and instant information (Eshet, 2025). The value of humility in seeking knowledge therefore serves as a moral and spiritual solution to restore learning ethics by encouraging respect for teachers, appreciation of the learning process, and awareness that knowledge is a gift from Allah that must be pursued with humility.

From a contemporary exegetical perspective, *Tafsir Al Misbah* explains that this verse reveals the purpose of Musa's visit to Khidir, namely to learn from him. It is narrated that Musa greeted Khidir and introduced himself, saying, "I am Musa." Khidir asked, "Musa from the Children of Israel?" to which Musa replied, "Yes." Khidir then honored him and asked about his purpose. Musa explained that he came hoping to be allowed to follow him so that Khidir might teach him some of the knowledge granted by Allah, knowledge that is beneficial and leads to righteous action. In response, Khidir

said, "Indeed you are Musa, but you will not be able to remain patient with me." This statement indicates that the events Musa would experience contained wisdom not easily understood, thus testing the patience of a seeker of knowledge (Shihab, 2002).

According to Tafsir Al Misbah, the attitude displayed by Musa toward Khidir represents genuine humility in seeking knowledge. Musa did not consider his prophetic status as making him superior to others. Instead, he recognized the vastness of Allah's knowledge and that every human being is granted only a small portion of it. This awareness gives rise to humility, a continuous desire to learn, and respect for those who possess knowledge. The interpretation emphasizes that humility is a fundamental foundation in the learning process. Without humility, knowledge is difficult to receive because arrogance closes the door to understanding. Musa thus becomes a model showing that even those with high status must approach learning with humility, respect teachers, and follow guidance patiently and sincerely.

From these two exegetical perspectives, it can be concluded that Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 contains important lessons about humility in seeking knowledge. The verse illustrates how even a highly knowledgeable figure such as Prophet Musa demonstrates humility when seeking knowledge from others. This attitude reflects awareness that the knowledge of Allah is vast while human knowledge is limited. Therefore, anyone seeking knowledge should approach it with humility, respect teachers, and value the learning process. Humility becomes the key for knowledge to be easily received and to bring blessing, whereas arrogance closes the door to understanding and prevents one from attaining the light of knowledge.

Humility in Seeking Knowledge from the Perspective of Q.S. Al Kahf Verse 66 as a Solution to the Moral Crisis of Students in the Digital Era

The phenomenon of moral crisis among students in the digital era indicates a shift in values within the learning process. The wide and rapid access to information often leads students to feel that they no longer need guidance from teachers. Research shows that digital learning facilitates access to learning materials and resources but also reduces direct interaction between teachers and students (Barokah et al., 2024). As a result, intellectual arrogance emerges, the authority of knowledge is underestimated, and learning ethics decline, including disrespect toward teachers and the loss of spiritual meaning in learning. In this context, the value of humility embedded in Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 offers a highly relevant solution to addressing the moral crisis faced by students in seeking knowledge in the digital age.

In the digital era, intellectual arrogance among students increasingly appears as a consequence of easy access to information. Many students feel they know everything simply because they can search for answers on the internet, without realizing that true knowledge requires depth of understanding and guidance from teachers. In this regard, humility as illustrated in Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 provides a meaningful solution. The verse portrays the exemplary conduct of Prophet Musa, who respectfully asked permission from Khidir to learn, even though he himself was a prophet of high status. This attitude demonstrates that the higher a person's rank, the greater the need for humility in seeking knowledge. It emphasizes that knowledge is a gift from Allah, not merely the result of personal intelligence or effort. Such awareness fosters gratitude and sincerity in learning so that knowledge is not used for self-display or pride.

Al Ghazali (2009) in *Ihya` Ulum al-Din* explains that sincerity and acknowledgment of one's limitations are prerequisites for knowledge to enter the heart and produce wisdom rather than arrogance. In line with this, research by Sartika (2019) found that students who cultivate gratitude and awareness that their abilities come from Allah demonstrate higher learning sincerity and reduced superiority attitudes. With a strong foundation of humility, students' intentions in learning are directed not toward competition or self-promotion but toward viewing learning as an act of worship and devotion to Allah.

Beyond arrogance, students in the digital era often display a lack of respect toward teachers, such as speaking without proper etiquette in class, ignoring advice, or undervaluing the role of teachers because they believe they can learn independently through technological resources (Bahrudin, 2021). This phenomenon reflects a shift in values in which knowledge is seen merely as data that can be obtained without academic authority (Raharjo et al., 2023). From an Islamic perspective, however, knowledge possesses a sacred value that requires proper etiquette in its acquisition (Apriansyah & Razzaq, 2024). Therefore, humility in seeking knowledge becomes a relevant solution to address declining respect for the authority of knowledge. Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 provides a foundational basis when Prophet Musa respectfully asked, "May I follow you so that you teach me some of the right guidance from what you have been taught?" This verse highlights that learning requires humility, respect for teachers, and willingness to be guided.

Empirical studies support this perspective, indicating that schools that cultivate humility successfully reduce students' tendencies toward arrogance or disregard for

teachers, both in face to face and online learning environments (Azidar, 2024). Other literature also emphasizes that habituating respect toward teachers significantly improves the quality of educational relationships, reduces disrespectful behavior in classrooms, and fosters awareness that learning success depends on etiquette and the blessing of knowledge rather than mere access to information (Aziz et al., 2024). Thus, humility in seeking knowledge serves as a moral safeguard against declining student etiquette in the digital era.

The findings of this study reinforce and extend previous research highlighting the moral crisis among students in the digital era, including rising intellectual arrogance, weakening learning ethics, and declining respect for teachers as discussed in the introduction (Alhamuddin et al., 2025; Anggraini et al., 2022; Luthfi et al., 2024). Unlike earlier studies that generally emphasize digital literacy or general ethical reinforcement, this study demonstrates that Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 provides a deeper theological foundation through the example of Prophet Musa humbling himself before Khidir (Meitsa Mona et al., 2025; Septiana, 2021). Accordingly, this research not only confirms the importance of moral values in digital education but also offers a Qur'anic framework that positions humility as the core of ethical transformation in learning.

Conceptually, the dialogue between these findings and previous studies suggests that the moral crisis among students is not solely caused by technological advancement but also by the weakening of spiritual awareness in understanding knowledge. While previous research emphasizes the need to strengthen integrity and academic ethics (Alhamuddin et al., 2025), this study shows that internalizing the value of humility can serve as a foundation for revitalizing educational relationships grounded in respect, patience, and awareness of human limitations. This underscores that solutions to moral crises require integration between pedagogical and spiritual approaches.

From the discussion above, it can be understood that the value of humility in seeking knowledge as reflected in Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 provides a relevant response to the moral crisis of students in the digital era. This value guides students to recognize that knowledge is a gift from Allah that must be pursued with proper etiquette, sincerity, and respect for teachers as intermediaries of knowledge. In the modern context, humility functions as a counterbalance to intellectual arrogance, the tendency to underestimate scholarly authority, and disrespect toward teachers that arise from the ease of digital information access. By cultivating humility, the pursuit of knowledge is oriented not only toward cognitive achievement but also toward the development of spiritual

character that frames learning as an act of worship and a path toward blessing and wisdom.

This study has several limitations. First, the research employs a qualitative library research approach that relies on the analysis of Qur'anic texts and exegetical literature; therefore, it does not involve direct empirical data concerning students' learning behavior. Second, the analysis primarily focuses on Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 as the main basis for exploring the value of humility in seeking knowledge. Despite these limitations, the study provides a conceptual understanding of ethical values in learning derived from the Qur'anic perspective. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to conduct empirical research examining the implementation of these values among students in educational institutions, or to integrate exegetical approaches with field research. Further research may also expand the analysis to other Qur'anic verses related to educational ethics and character development in the digital era.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate significant novelty, namely that Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 not only conveys a normative message regarding the etiquette of seeking knowledge but also offers an ethical and spiritual framework relevant to addressing the moral crisis of students in the digital era. Through an analysis of classical and contemporary exegesis, this study finds that the attitude of humility demonstrated by Prophet Musa when learning from Khidir represents an ideal model of a learner who is willing to lower intellectual ego, acknowledge personal limitations, and respect the authority of knowledge. The primary contribution of this study lies in contextualizing Qur'anic humility within the realities of digital education characterized by easy access to information, intellectual arrogance, and declining respect toward teachers. These findings affirm that the root of the moral crisis in learning is not merely technological advancement but a crisis of learning ethics. Accordingly, Q.S. Al Kahf verse 66 can be understood as both a normative reference and a practical guide for cultivating learners who are humble, ethical, and oriented toward the blessing of knowledge.

The implications of this study indicate that the value of humility in seeking knowledge needs to be systematically integrated into education, particularly Islamic education, through curriculum design, habituation of attitudes, and teacher role modeling. Humility functions not only as an individual virtue but also as the foundation of healthy educational relationships between teachers and students amid the dominance

of digital technology. his study emphasizes that character formation cannot rely solely on improving digital literacy but must also involve strengthening the ethical and spiritual dimensions of learning. Nevertheless, this research has limitations because it employs a qualitative library research approach and does not involve direct empirical field data concerning student behavior. Furthermore, the analysis focuses on a single Qur'anic verse as its primary basis. Therefore, future research is recommended to develop empirical studies or combine exegetical approaches with field research, as well as expand the analysis to other Qur'anic verses relevant to educational ethics and character development in the digital era.

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