

LITERACY OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS: A MEANS OF BUILDING STUDENT CHARACTER IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Mesi Rawanita^{1*}, Zubaidah², Khairan³

^{1,2} UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, ³ Universitas Teuku Umar

Contributor E-mail: mesirawanita.id24@gmail.com

Abstrak

Revolusi digital telah membawa perubahan besar dalam dunia pendidikan, termasuk dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI), yang menuntut guru untuk menguasai literasi digital, pedagogis, dan konten. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengaruh literasi guru terhadap pembentukan karakter siswa dalam PAI di era digital. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode library research, studi ini menganalisis literatur terkait literasi guru, pendidikan karakter, dan teknologi pendidikan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa literasi digital guru memengaruhi kualitas pengajaran dan efektivitas pendidikan karakter. Guru yang memiliki literasi digital tinggi mampu memanfaatkan alat digital untuk menciptakan pembelajaran yang interaktif dan bermakna, sementara guru dengan literasi rendah cenderung bergantung pada metode tradisional yang kurang relevan dengan kebutuhan siswa di era digital. Hambatan utama yang diidentifikasi meliputi keterbatasan akses teknologi, kurangnya pelatihan literasi digital, dan resistensi budaya terhadap teknologi modern. Studi ini merekomendasikan pelatihan berkelanjutan, penyediaan infrastruktur teknologi, dan pengembangan kurikulum yang mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Islam dengan pendekatan digital untuk meningkatkan efektivitas pendidikan karakter.

Kata Kunci: Literasi Guru, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Pendidikan Karakter, Era Digital

Abstract

The digital revolution has brought significant changes to the world of education, including Islamic Religious Education, requiring teachers to master digital literacy, pedagogy, and content. This study explores teacher literacy's impact on character development in Islamic Religious Education during the digital era. Using a qualitative approach with a library research method, this study analyzes literature on teacher literacy, character education, and educational technology. The findings indicate that teachers' digital literacy influences teaching quality and the effectiveness of character education. Teachers with high digital literacy can leverage digital tools to create interactive and meaningful learning experiences. In contrast, those with low digital literacy tend to rely on traditional methods less relevant to students' needs in the digital age. Key challenges identified include limited access to technology, lack of digital literacy training, and cultural resistance to modern technology. This study recommends continuous training, the provision of technological infrastructure, and

curriculum development that integrates Islamic values with digital approaches to enhance the effectiveness of character education.

Keywords: Teacher Literacy, Islamic Religious Education, Character Education, Digital Era

A. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has fundamentally changed the educational landscape, introducing opportunities and challenges for educators worldwide (Manan, 2023). In the context of Islamic Religious Education, in Bahasa abbreviated as PAI, this transformation provides a unique responsibility for teachers. As guardians of knowledge and morality, Islamic Religious Education teachers are tasked with instilling religious principles while maintaining their students' ethical and spiritual character (Sa'datul Marwah, 2023; Yasmansyah & Zakir, 2022). This dual role is vital in the digital era, where the proliferation of technology has strengthened students' exposure to diverse values and ideologies, some of which are at odds with Islamic teachings.

Teacher literacy, which includes digital, pedagogical, and content literacy, has become an important competency in navigating these challenges. It empowers educators to effectively integrate Islamic values with modern educational tools, ensuring that students excel academically and embody strong moral character (Bakar et al., 2024). The development of students' character, which is rooted in ethical reasoning, discipline, empathy, and respect, remains the cornerstone of Islamic education. However, the increasing reliance on digital technology requires teachers to adjust their methods to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of their teaching.

Despite the increasing emphasis on integrating digital tools into education, many Islamic Religious Education teachers struggle to embrace these changes entirely. Their challenges include a lack of training in digital literacy, limited access to technological resources, and cultural or institutional resistance to adopting modern methodologies. These barriers often lead to a disconnect between the traditional goals of Islamic education and the demands of the contemporary educational environment (Amelia, 2023; Susanto & Hermina, 2024). In addition, although the role of teacher literacy in general education has been studied extensively, its specific impact on character development in the context of Islamic Religious Education is still poorly explored (Muttaqien et al., 2023; Sundari, 2024). The gap in this study leaves educators without a clear framework for leveraging digital literacy to improve moral and spiritual education, highlighting the need for a comprehensive study to address this issue.

This study has substantial significance for theory and practice. On a practical level, it seeks to provide teachers of Islamic Religious Education with a deeper understanding of how digital literacy can be used as a tool for character development. By highlighting successful strategies and addressing common barriers, this study aims to equip educators with the resources and skills necessary to navigate the complexities of modern education. In addition, these findings are expected to inform the development of teacher training programs and policy

initiatives that prioritize digital literacy and character education within Islamic educational institutions.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the growth of literature at the intersection of digital literacy, character education, and Islamic pedagogy. It offers a new framework for understanding how traditional values can be preserved and promoted through modern teaching methodologies. By bridging the gap between these domains, this study provides the basis for future research on integrating digital tools in moral and spiritual education.

In an era where digital transformation is reshaping every aspect of life, the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers as moral guides and educators remains indispensable. This research underscores the importance of equipping these teachers with the literacy skills necessary to inspire and shape the character of their students, ensuring that Islamic values continue to evolve in a rapidly changing world.

This study explores the complex relationship between teacher literacy and character education in Islamic Religious Education, especially in the digital era. It aims to analyze how teacher literacy affects student character formation, identify effective strategies for integrating digital tools into moral and spiritual education, and examine the obstacles teachers face in this process. By addressing these goals, the study aspires to provide actionable insights and practical recommendations for educators, policymakers, and institutions seeking to improve the quality of Islamic education.

The main focus of this research revolves around understanding the influence of teacher literacy on the formation of students' character in Islamic Religious Education. Key questions include: How does the literacy of Islamic Religious Education teachers shape their students' moral and ethical character in the digital context? What are the most effective strategies in integrating digital literacy into character-building initiatives? What challenges and limitations do teachers face when incorporating digital tools into their teaching practices? How can teacher literacy be improved to meet the needs of students growing in the digital era?

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Concept of Literacy in Islamic Religious Education

Teacher literacy is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective teaching and learning. In the context of PAI, teacher literacy goes beyond technical expertise to include a deep understanding of Islamic teachings and values. This form of literacy involves three important components: content literacy, which deals with knowledge of Islamic principles and traditions; pedagogical literacy, which refers to the ability to design and deliver effective lessons; and digital literacy, which focuses on the use of modern technology to improve teaching and learning outcomes (Agus Sulistyono & Ismarti, 2022).

Integrating Islamic values into teaching is a characteristic that determines teacher literacy in IRE. Teachers are expected to exemplify these values in their interactions with students, using them to develop moral reasoning, ethical behavior, and spiritual awareness. By instilling these values in their teaching practices, educators play an important role in fostering

an environment where students can internalize Islamic principles and apply them in their daily lives.

2. Character Education in the Digital Era

Character education is an integral component of Islamic education, which aims to develop students' moral, ethical, and spiritual character that is in harmony with Islamic teachings (Kasman et al., 2022). The core principles of character education include honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect, which are universally recognized as essential traits for the well-being of individuals and society (Shalahuddin et al., 2024). Islamic education often emphasizes these principles through formal curriculum and informal interactions, with teachers serving as role models and guides.

In the digital era, character education faces new challenges and opportunities. Digital tools offer innovative ways to engage students, providing access to diverse resources and interactive platforms that enrich their understanding of Islamic values. However, the same tools can expose students to conflicting ideologies and unethical content, underscoring the importance of teacher literacy in guiding students to use technology responsibly (Dwi Cahyani et al., 2023). Therefore, educators must adapt their methods to incorporate digital literacy while focusing on character building, ensuring that students develop critical thinking skills and moral resilience in navigating the complexities of the digital world.

3. The Role of Teachers in Islamic Education

Teachers play an important role in Islamic education as role models and facilitators. Their influence extends beyond the classroom, shaping students' moral and spiritual development through their behaviors, attitudes, and teaching practices. In the digital era, teachers are expected to have literacy competencies that effectively integrate Islamic values with contemporary teaching methods (Judrah et al., 2024).

Key literacy competencies include curating and utilizing digital resources, designing interactive and meaningful learning experiences, and addressing the ethical implications of digital content. In addition, teachers must demonstrate cultural sensitivity and adaptability, balancing preserving Islamic traditions with integrating modern tools and techniques. By embodying these competencies, teachers can create a dynamic learning environment that promotes academic excellence and character development.

4. Challenges in the Digital Age

The digital era presents several challenges for Islamic Religious Education teachers, especially in balancing traditional Islamic teachings with modern educational methods. Technological barriers, such as limited access to digital tools and inadequate training, often hinder teachers' ability to harness digital technologies' potential fully. Additionally, the rapid pace of technological advancement can make it difficult for educators to keep up with the latest tools and trends, further exacerbating the digital divide (Sa'diyah, 2023).

Another significant challenge lies in reconciling Islamic education values with the demands of the digital world (Hermawanto & Anggrani, 2020). Teachers must navigate the tension between maintaining the integrity of Islamic teachings and adapting to new pedagogical

approaches that may not be aligned with traditional methods. This requires a nuanced understanding of Islamic principles and contemporary educational practices and the ability to critically assess and integrate digital tools in a way that enhances, rather than undermines, the goals of Islamic education.

C. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with the library research method to understand the relationship between teacher literacy and character education in Islamic Religious Education in the digital era. The *library research approach* was chosen because it can dig into various literature, theories, and previous research findings in depth to comprehensively understand the topic being studied (Creswell, 2010). Data was collected by searching secondary literature such as journal articles, academic books, dissertations, research reports, and policy documents, using databases such as *Google Scholar*, *Scopus*, *DOAJ*, *ResearchGate*, and national portals such as Sinta and Garuda.

Literature is selected based on criteria: published in the last 10 years (2013–2023), relevant to the research theme, published in reputable journals, and written in Indonesian or English. Data analysis involves *content analysis*, identifying themes, grouping data, comparing findings, and synthesizing information to build a conceptual framework. This process includes a critical review of previous theories and findings, resulting in a synthesis relevant to the research focus (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Source triangulation is used to improve the validity of research results.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Tracking the Literacy of Islamic Religious Education Teachers

This study shows a striking variation in the literacy level of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, especially regarding digital skills and pedagogical competence. In general, most PAI teachers have a good mastery of the basic principles of Islamic teachings and traditional teaching methods that have been mainstays in teaching and learning. However, in the context of the digital age, teachers' ability to integrate technology into learning and character education is very diverse, with uneven success rates among them (Kurniati et al., 2020; Usman et al., 2022).

Teachers with longer teaching experience, especially those who have gained access to professional development programs, tend to have better levels of digital literacy. They can use digital devices such as computers, tablets, or learning applications to deliver more effective material. These teachers also show a higher understanding of how digital tools can support student character formation, for example, by integrating Islamic values through interactive platforms or digital media (Bahri, 2022; Ruswiansari et al., 2021).

On the other hand, some groups of teachers face serious challenges in adopting digital technology. These challenges include a lack of access to technological tools, limitations in understanding how digital tools work, and difficulties adapting to rapid technological developments. These teachers often feel burdened by the demands to learn new technologies, which ultimately hinders their ability to effectively integrate technology in teaching (Hidayat & Khotimah, 2019). This situation not only creates a gap in teaching practices among teachers

but also reduces the maximum potential of applying digital technology in Islamic religious education.

Further literature review reveals that teachers' digital literacy is the ability to operate technological devices and the pedagogical competencies necessary to convey Islamic values through digital media effectively. Teachers' digital literacy also involves a deep understanding of how to select and use relevant digital resources, design technology-based learning, and evaluate their impact on student character formation (Nurbayanni et al., 2023).

Teachers with low digital literacy tend to rely on traditional methods such as lectures and memorization, which, while effective in specific contexts, can become less relevant amid the rapid development of the digital world. Reliance on this method also reduces students' chances of being actively involved in learning and developing critical thinking skills and contextual understanding of Islamic teachings. In contrast, teachers with high digital literacy can combine traditional methods with digital technology, creating a more dynamic and meaningful learning experience for students.

Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of increasing digital literacy evenly among PAI teachers to answer the challenges of the digital era. Continuous intensive training is needed to help teachers improve their understanding of technology and pedagogical skills, whether facilitated by governments, educational institutions, or other institutions. This training also needs to include a contextual approach that integrates Islamic values with modern technology, so that teachers can feel more confident in utilizing technology without feeling that they are sacrificing the authenticity of religious teachings.

The level of digital literacy of PAI teachers directly affects the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of character education in the digital era. Therefore, this increase in literacy is not only an urgent need but also a strategic step to ensure that Islamic religious education remains relevant and positively impacts the younger generation living in an increasingly digitally connected world.

2. Teacher Strategy and Technology Utilization

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers have developed various innovative strategies to integrate Islamic values with digital technology in the learning process.

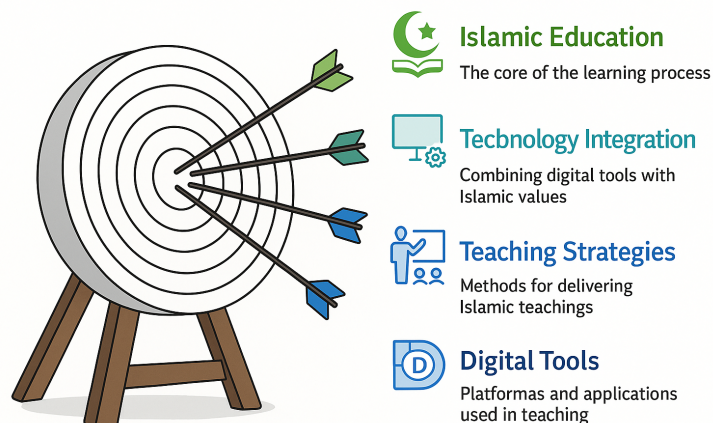


Figure 1. PAI Teaching Strategies with Technology

One of the strategies that stands out is the use of multimedia, where teachers utilize videos, animations, and infographics to illustrate the teachings of Islam. This approach makes the learning material more visually appealing and makes it easier for students to understand the religious concepts taught (Adedo & Deriwanto, 2024). In addition, digital storytelling techniques are also effective methods. Using digital-based stories, teachers can convey moral messages relevant to students' lives. This technique helps students internalize character values in a fun and memorable way.

Interactive learning platforms are also an important tool in teachers' teaching strategies. Online applications and platforms such as *Google Classroom*, *Edmodo*, and *Padlet* facilitate deeper discussions, encourage critical reflection, and improve student collaboration (Sholeh, 2023). For example, through *Padlet*, students can actively share their thoughts on the values of honesty in Islam through digital posters. At the same time, discussions in *Google Classroom* allow teachers to provide direct feedback on students' religious reflections. This approach makes students not only passive recipients, but also actively participate in the learning process so that Islamic values can be appreciated more deeply and applied in daily life. Teachers who successfully implement this strategy can combine technological innovation with Islamic core values, creating a learning environment that is collaborative, applicable, and relevant to the needs of the digital generation.

Nevertheless, the success of these strategies depends heavily on the ability of teachers to align technology with Islamic principles. The main challenge is to ensure that the technology used does not alter or diminish the authenticity of the religious teachings taught. With a careful and thoughtful approach, teachers can leverage modern technology to enrich religious learning without sacrificing the traditional values that are the primary foundation of Islamic education.

3. Challenges and Obstacles of Islamic Education in the Digital Era

The integration of digital technology in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning faces significant challenges, which need to be considered to ensure its success in improving the quality of education.

Table 1. Challenges of Digital Technology Integration in PAI Learning

Challenge	Description
Limitations of Technology Access	Teachers in remote areas have difficulty accessing digital devices and stable internet, limiting learning innovation.
Inadequate infrastructure	The absence of digital facilities has caused the learning method to return to the conventional lecture pattern.
Lack of Digital Literacy Training	Not all teachers receive training, creating a gap in integrating technology.
Traditional Perception of Teachers	Concerns about losing the authenticity of Islamic teachings have made some teachers reluctant to use technology.
Lack of Institutional Support	Lack of infrastructure investment and ongoing training hinders effective technology integration.

The main obstacle is limited access to technology. Many teachers, especially those in remote or underdeveloped areas, have difficulty accessing digital devices such as computers, tablets, or projectors, as well as stable internet connectivity (Firdaus & Ritonga, 2024; Munir & Zumrotus Su'ada, 2024; Sundari, 2024). This condition limits their ability to use digital tools optimally in the learning process.

Without adequate infrastructure support, the potential of digital technology to enrich PAI teaching and character education is not maximized. For example, in a school in a remote area, PAI teachers plan to use interactive videos and online discussion platforms to teach morals. However, the device's limitations, the absence of a projector, and the unstable internet forced him to revert to conventional lecture methods. As a result, students do not get an enjoyable and applicable learning experience. Learning becomes rigid, less inspiring, and character values are difficult to internalize. This shows that the limitations of technology and infrastructure hinder innovation and degrade the quality of PAI teaching and the effectiveness of character education.

In addition, the lack of digital literacy training for teachers is also a significant obstacle. Not all teachers can participate in professional development programs focusing on digital literacy and technology integration in teaching (Ikhwan et al., 2023). As a result, there is a striking gap in digital pedagogical abilities among teachers. Some teachers with access to training show better ability to leverage technology to support learning, while others are lagging and rely solely on traditional teaching methods. This gap creates additional challenges in creating a consistent and equitable learning experience for students.

Traditional perceptions among some teachers are also an important obstacle to adopting digital technology. Some concerns using modern technology may reduce the value of the authenticity of Islamic teachings (Hakim et al., 2024). Teachers who hold this view often hesitate to fully integrate technology into their teaching methods, worried that a digital approach could deviate from the essence of pure religious teaching. These concerns, while valid, sometimes hinder the exploration of the potential of technology in supporting Islamic values-based character education.

These barriers highlight the importance of institutional support in fostering effective integration of digital technologies in PAI learning. Investment in technological infrastructure, such as providing adequate digital devices and internet networks, should be a priority, especially in less affordable areas. In addition, an ongoing training program is needed to improve teachers' digital literacy, which includes technical aspects and pedagogical approaches relevant to the context of Islamic education. Education policies that support innovation without sacrificing traditional values must also be developed so that teachers feel supported in authentically integrating modern technology with Islamic teachings. By overcoming these barriers, integrating digital technology can be an effective tool to enrich PAI education in the digital era, while maintaining the core values of Islam.

4. Impact on Student Character: A Synthesis of Research Findings

The study results show that integrating digital technology in Islamic Religious Education learning can significantly contribute to developing students' character. One of the most prominent positive impacts is the increased involvement of students in the learning

process. Digital media, such as interactive videos, simulations, or educational applications, create a more engaging and participatory learning experience, thus encouraging students to be more actively engaged. This increased participation strengthens their academic understanding but also helps foster a sense of responsibility and concern for the Islamic values they teach.

In addition, using digital technology in PAI learning also contributes to developing students' social skills. Features like interactive discussions, collaboration through online learning platforms, or digital project-based activities allow students to cooperate with their classmates. Through this process, students learn to respect differences, develop empathy, and build respect for others. This approach can broaden students' understanding of how Islamic principles can be applied in broader social relations.

Students' ethical understanding has also significantly developed through technology guidance. Teachers who use digital tools wisely can help students understand religious teachings in the modern context. For example, Islamic values of honesty, responsibility, and ethics can be instilled through relevant discussions, such as using social media correctly and following religious values. This approach makes religious learning theory-based and relevant to the daily challenges students face in the digital era.

Although digital technology offers many opportunities to enrich PAI learning and form positive character, its impact depends on teacher guidance. Without proper direction, students can easily access digital content that is contrary to Islamic teachings, such as violence, pornography, or radical beliefs, which has the potential to damage their morals. In addition, uncontrolled use of social media can encourage negative behaviors such as *cyberbullying*, gadget addiction, or the spread of hoaxes, which are contrary to the values of honesty, responsibility, and mutual respect in Islam. Therefore, teachers' digital literacy is a key element. Teachers not only need to understand how to use technology technically, but also must be able to filter, direct, and supervise the use of digital media by students to keep them in line with religious principles. Without these skills, digital media can seriously threaten students' Islamic character formation, not as a supporting tool.

This study highlights that the digital literacy of Islamic Religious Education teachers plays a very important role in character education in the digital era. Teachers' digital literacy is not only a supporting factor that can maximize the benefits of technology in learning, but it can also be a barrier if not appropriately managed. Although digital technology offers an excellent opportunity to improve learning effectiveness, the success of its implementation is primarily determined by the level of readiness of teachers to use technology and the institutional support available.

These findings also show that the sustainability of teachers' professional development is urgently needed. Structured and continuous digital literacy training programs must be provided regularly, so PAI teachers can continue improving their skills. In addition, the availability of digital devices and adequate internet access must be a priority, especially in areas with minimal technology. A good infrastructure will ensure that all teachers have an equal opportunity to utilize technology in learning.

An integrated approach is also indispensable to ensure that PAI learning remains authentic while leveraging digital innovation. The PAI curriculum needs to be strategically designed to combine traditional methods with modern approaches, so that the core values of

Islam are maintained, but still relevant to the needs of the times. This discussion emphasized the importance of creating harmony between the preservation of Islamic traditions and adaptation to technological developments, so that character education remains relevant and impactful in this digital era.

E. CONCLUSION

This research answers three main questions about the relationship between teacher literacy and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the digital era. *First*, teacher literacy, especially digital literacy, is important in shaping students' moral and ethical character. Teachers with high digital literacy can use technology to convey Islamic values through relevant, interactive, and contextual learning methods. Teachers can help students internalize values such as responsibility, empathy, and integrity in daily life by integrating digital tools, such as interactive and multimedia learning platforms.

Second, the most effective strategies involve using digital tools such as videos, animations, digital-based stories, and interactive applications that allow students to participate in the learning process actively. Teachers who are successful in this strategy can combine technological innovation with Islamic values through in-depth approaches, such as project-based discussions or ethical simulations in the digital world.

Third, teachers face key challenges, including a lack of access to technological tools, limited digital literacy training, and cultural resistance to modern technology in Islamic education. These barriers often reduce the effectiveness of technology integration and create gaps in teachers' ability to support students' character education.

As a recommendation, this study emphasizes the importance of the sustainable development of digital literacy training programs for PAI teachers, the provision of adequate technological infrastructure, and the development of a curriculum that integrates Islamic values with modern pedagogical approaches. With these steps, character education in PAI can be more relevant, adaptive, and impactful in the digital era.

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