



Challenges of Islamic Religious Education in the Digital Age: Building Harmony between Traditional Authority and Technological Algorithms

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Abstract

This article aims to outline the challenges of Islamic religious education in the digital age and analyze the shift in Islamic religious education from classical learning sources based on Islamic books and traditional authorities, such as religious teachers and ulama, to technological algorithms. It also proposes solutions for building harmony between these traditional authorities and digital technology. This research method used a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) involving the collection and analysis of data from various relevant sources, such as books, journal articles, research reports, and digital sources that discuss the challenges of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in the digital age, the shift in authority in social media, and proposed solutions for harmonizing traditional authority with technological algorithms. The research results indicate that technological algorithms have a positive impact on increasing student interest in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), by providing more visual and interactive material presentation, enhancing broader accessibility, enriching Islamic religious education materials, and improving the quality of learning. Negative impacts include internet addiction, vulnerability to false

information or hoaxes, and low digital and religious literacy exploited by deviant content. Harmonizing traditional authority and technological algorithms in Islamic religious education requires strengthening digital and religious literacy. Digital literacy here is not only about technical skills in using devices and applications, but also the ability to filter information that is credible, objective, and scientifically grounded.

Keywords: *Challenges, Digital, Islamic Religious Education, Technological Algorithm, Traditional Authority*

A. Introduction

The significant changes in today's socio-religious landscape are inextricably linked to the rapid flow of digitalization. In the digital era, religious authority no longer relies exclusively on scholarly traditions or formal religious educational institutions. Instead, social media has opened up new spaces that challenge the old boundaries of such authority (Hang, 2024). This shift indicates a paradigm shift in who is considered authorized to teach and convey Islamic religious education, and influences public religious understanding (Nurhamidin et al., 2025). Social media has now become a primary platform for the dissemination of information and human interaction (Chandrasekharan, 2024). Data from 2024–2025 shows the massive integration of social media into education, with 67.65% of Indonesian students using the internet to access social media, and 90% of students using it for independent learning. Platforms like TikTok (90.8%) and Instagram (80%) dominate, facilitating discussion and access to information, but also risking a decrease in learning focus (Setiani, Pratiwi & Nihayah, 2024). Social media has become a significant informal learning space for students to understand and develop religious knowledge. Changes in student learning patterns, leading to more active, visual, and collaborative learning, make social media a potential tool for improving the quality of Islamic religious education (PAI). However, this potential has not been fully integrated into Islamic learning strategies in higher education (Choiri, 2024). An interesting phenomenon has emerged in this context: the massive spread of Islamic studies in the digital realm. In this fast-paced and easily accessible digital era, social media has become a center of gravity for various types of information, including religious information. At the same time, this era also forces all sectors to innovate to maintain their existence, including in the field of education (Sadik, 2025).

The emergence of Generation Z students, connected to technology from birth, complements the changing times. The emerging new world is capable of

shifting established paradigms, starting with traditional teaching and now shifting to digital technology (Cura et.al., 2022). This transformation is not only technological but also sociological, affecting legitimacy structures, power relations, and even public perceptions of religious truth itself.

The lack of teachers and religious figures capable of conveying relevant and inspiring messages in a language appropriate to this generation presents an additional obstacle. Gen Z is more connected to role models close to their daily lives, such as influencers or public figures, than to traditional religious figures. Furthermore, conventional religious learning methods, such as monotonous lectures, often fail to capture the attention of those accustomed to interactive and creative digital content (Supriadi and Taufiqurrahman, 2025). This implies a paradigm shift in education. If in the past Islamic religious education relied on traditional authorities such as religious teachers and experts in the field of Islamic religion (ulama) with classical-traditional learning in schools and Islamic boarding schools, now the generation of learners interacts more and relies on digital technology algorithms.

Islamic religious learning in the digital space is a complex phenomenon that presents both innovative opportunities and epistemological challenges to established structures of religious authority. On the one hand, the presence of Islamic content on social media allows for expanded access to Islamic knowledge through contextual, visual, and communicative approaches (Ghufron, 2022). The digital format of Islamic religious education simplifies complex concepts in Islamic religious education materials, facilitating Generation Z's understanding of Quranic and Hadith texts, Aqidah (Islamic creed), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and the history of Islamic civilization. However, on the other hand, social media algorithms tend to promote content based on visual appeal and popularity, rather than scientific validity.

The ease of access to Islamic religious education materials in the digital space encourages the rapid and widespread dissemination of religious messages, making digital platforms potentially effective Islamic learning media for Generation Z. However, unfiltered access also gives rise to contested Islamic study practices, as educators' credibility is sometimes uncertain, and verification of Islamic references is often neglected (Rodliyaton, 2022). Thus, the problem of Islamic religious education in the digital era is increasingly complex, as it concerns not only religious authority but also the authenticity of Islamic religious education resources. Today, religious studies are no longer limited to classical literature from books taught in

schools and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Instead, the public can access Islamic religious education resources through digital platforms with a single command in algorithmic search engines like Google and various artificial intelligence tools, such as ChatGPT, Perplexity, and deep learning (Mubarok and Romdhoni, 2021). This phenomenon has created a new ecosystem distinct from classical traditions, as Islamic references are no longer written solely in books but are packaged in thematic captions, short videos, infographics, audiovisual animations, memes, and interactive audiobooks, although the accuracy and authenticity of these references are not necessarily guaranteed. This article, which will examine the challenges of Islamic religious education in the digital era and analyze the shift in Islamic religious education from classical learning resources based on Islamic books and traditional authorities such as religious teachers and ulama (Islamic scholars), to technological algorithms. At the same time, it is a solution to build harmony between traditional authorities and digital technology.

This research employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with a qualitative approach. The SLR method is a term used to refer to a research and development methodology used to collect and evaluate research related to a specific topic, then analyze theoretical and empirical evidence from these credible sources (Rokhman et.al, 2025). The SLR research steps include selecting literature (study selection), extracting data, and assessing the quality of studies with the aim of ensuring the quality and validity of the selected research for the objectivity of the results. This SLR method enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the research's conceptual framework, identify remaining knowledge gaps, and guide future research (Alfaizi, Airohmah, and Anbiya, 2023). In the context of this research, the SLR method involved collecting and analyzing data from various relevant sources, such as books, journal articles, research reports, and digital sources that address the challenges of digital Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, shifting authority in social media, and proposed solutions for harmonizing traditional authority with technological algorithms.

Among the research sources that have discussed digital Islamic Religious Education learning can be classified into three clusters: First, studies on the digitalization of Islamic Religious Education and its learning innovations, such as studies conducted by W. W. Goh, J. L. Hong, and & Gunawan, "Exploring Students' Perceptions of Learning Management System: An Empirical Study Based on TAM" (2013); "The Role of Social Media in the Formation of Religious Character in Children" by Khairil Candra Wijaya (2025); Concept Analysis, Information

Technology Theory and Its Implications in the Development of Islamic Education Learning Technology in Indonesia by Alfaizi, Airohmah, and Fatwa Anbiya (2023); Islamic Religious Education Learning Innovation in the Digital Era: Strategies to Cultivate Gen-Z's Interest in Learning by Dedi Supriadi, Taufiqurrahman, and Samsuddin (2025).

Second, studies on the problems and challenges of Islamic Religious Education in the digital era, such as the published research of Heidi A. Campbell and Ruth Tsuria, *Digital Religion Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media*. Routledge (2022); *Beyond the Scroll: Exploring the Impact of Social Media on Individuals and Organisations* by Lakshmi Chandrasekharan (2024); *Digital-Based Islamic Religious Education Learning* by Iqbal Syahrijar, Ildira Az-Zahra, Udin Supriadi, Agus Fakhrudin (2023); Amatillah Thaha (2023).

Third, studies on the role and impact of technology on religious studies, such as the study of Glueckauf, Robert L., Marlene M. Maheu, Kenneth P. Drude, Brittny A. Wells, Yuxia Wang, David J. Gustafson, & Nelson, E. (2018); *The Role of Educational Technology in Islamic Religious Education Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic* by Ardita, C. R., Salsabila, U. H. Syarofah, A., Pahlevie, M. S., & Risam, M. R. N. (2021); *Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Islamic Education* by Fauzi, M. and Arifin, M. S. (2023); *The Role of Educational Technology in Islamic Religious Education Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic* by Unik Hanifah Salsabila, Muhammad Lutfi Nur Hanifan, Muhammad Ibnu Mahmuda, Muhammad Afif Nur Tajuddin, Anggi Pratiwi (2023); *The Role of Technology in the Development of 21st Century Islamic Education in the Era of Society 5.0* by by Habibah Shofiyah Assyifa, Ima Fitriyah, Munawir (2024).

B. Results and Discussion

1. Digital Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning and the Influence of Technological Algorithms

a. Innovation in Digital Islamic Religious Education Learning

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a crucial subject in the Indonesian education system. Islamic religious education is a conscious effort to prepare students to believe in, understand, internalize, and practice Islam through guidance, teaching, and training activities (Wijaya, 2025). Islamic religious education aims to shape students who believe in and are devoted to Allah SWT, have noble morals, and possess good character.

Digital Islamic religious education learning can encourage inclusive learning, especially for Generation Z students. They, from diverse backgrounds and geographic locations, can gain access to quality religious education (Arifah, 2024). Discussion and exploration methods can be developed to increase student participation and engagement in learning, which positively impacts their learning outcomes (Clipa, 2021). Through digital platforms and interactive media, students can be more actively involved and gain more meaningful learning experiences. This contrasts with conventional learning approaches, which have significant weaknesses, such as minimal two-way interaction between teachers and students, low levels of active student participation, and underdevelopment of critical and creative thinking skills (Thaha, 2023). Students tend to be passive, easily bored, and have relatively low learning motivation compared to innovative learning methods (Greenhow et al., 2016). Furthermore, conventional learning tends to be teacher-centered, where learning success is measured primarily by mastery of the material presented, rather than by the development of students' overall potential and competencies (Fahrudin, Ansari, and Shofiyuddin Ichsan, 2021).

According to Maulina Fitri (2025), the greatest impact of technology use in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is seen in increasing student learning motivation. This demonstrates that technology can inspire students to be more active in the learning process. Digital media such as learning videos, interactive quizzes, and educational applications make teaching materials more engaging and enjoyable. With a varied and non-monotonous learning environment, students become more motivated to learn, even regarding religious material previously considered difficult or boring. Technology also plays a role in increasing active student participation. Through features such as online discussion forums, polls, or digital quizzes, students are encouraged to express their opinions and answers directly. This creates a more inclusive space for participation, even for students who are typically passive in conventional classes (Romero et al., 2025). Thus, the learning process becomes more dynamic and involves all students equally. Although its contribution to improving material understanding is minimal, the use of technology still has a significant impact. The use of media such as video and other audio-visual media in Islamic Religious Education learning can help students understand abstract concepts in Islamic teachings in a more concrete and applicable way. This is especially helpful for students with visual or kinesthetic learning styles, as they can absorb material more effectively through visual and practical learning experiences.

In addition to increasing student motivation and participation, technology also significantly contributes to learning effectiveness. Teachers can now deliver material in a more structured and efficient manner through various media such as digital presentations, e-learning platforms, or quiz websites. Technology enables flexible learning, both synchronously (live) and asynchronously (indirect), allowing students to access and review material as needed. This convenience helps students achieve learning objectives more optimally. Furthermore, the use of technology has also had a positive impact on increasing student interest in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The more visual and interactive presentation of material makes lessons feel more lively and contextual. Students also feel more emotionally and intellectually engaged in the learning process. Furthermore, easy access to various digital information sources encourages students to explore material further independently through digital literacy activities, rather than relying solely on teacher explanations (Inayah et al., 2025).

Among the platforms used in digital Islamic Religious Education (ISE) learning is the Learning Management System (LMS), a web-based learning platform that serves to present information, learning materials, and evaluate student learning outcomes, such as Google Classroom, Moodle, or Edmodo. LMS features, such as online interaction, the provision of learning materials, and feedback provided by educators, have a positive impact on student achievement. Furthermore, students have the opportunity to access materials, participate in discussions, and receive assessments as a result of their learning virtually (Goh, Hong, and Gunawan, 2013).

Integrating social media to deliver ISE materials is also necessary in this digital era. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, originally designed for communication and information sharing, have now evolved into tools that support various fields, including education. In the context of ISE, social media has significant potential to support the delivery of materials in a more interactive and relevant manner, especially for Generation Z students who are highly familiar with digital technology. In this context, social media opens up opportunities to disseminate religious information widely, allowing students easy access to teaching materials and encouraging active interaction between teachers and students. Through social media, students can participate in religious studies, discussions, or lessons in real time, which were previously difficult to access. Furthermore, social media creates active learning communities where students and educators can share ideas, discuss topics, and deepen their religious understanding (Campbell and Tsuria, 2022).

Platforms like YouTube and TikTok, popular among Generation Z, can be utilized as creative and engaging learning media. YouTube, for example, can increase students' motivation to learn and creativity by providing engaging educational content (Purba, 2024). Meanwhile, TikTok provides a space for students to express their creativity through short videos packed with interactive features, making it an effective learning tool, especially during the pandemic (Elias et.al., 2022).

The integration of social media into Islamic Religious Education learning also aligns with the development of Electronic Learning (E-Learning). This electronic-based learning allows students to learn flexibly, anytime and anywhere, with easier access and more affordable costs. Social media functions as a tool for collaboration, communication, and creative expression, making learning more engaging and interactive. In practice, social media not only improves the quality of religious education by providing easy access but also broadens the horizons of students and teachers. With this innovative approach, Islamic Religious Education learning can be more effective in building student engagement, enriching learning experiences, and instilling religious values in the daily lives of Generation Z students (Supriadi and Taufiqurrahman, 2025).

b. The Impact of Technology on Islamic Religious Education Learning

Islamic Religious Education learning has often been associated with a normative, formal, and memorization-oriented approach. Meanwhile, the realities of digital culture demand a more contextual, communicative, and creative approach. Within this framework, technological algorithms as educational media in Islamic Religious Education learning play a significant role in enriching the learning experience and developing religious understanding. One innovation in Islamic education is the development of e-learning applications and platforms specifically designed for Islamic religious learning, as described above.

Technological developments have had a significant positive impact on various aspects of human life, including Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Technology has transformed learning and teaching methods, opened up new opportunities, and provided broader accessibility for students. Previously, education was limited to physical classrooms, but with educational technology, students can now access learning materials without the constraints of space and time. This enables distance or online learning, where students can take courses and earn degrees without having to attend a campus. This is especially beneficial for

those living in remote areas or with physical limitations that prevent them from attending conventional education (Assyifa, Fitriyah, and Munawir, 2024).

In addition to accessibility and enrichment of Islamic religious education materials, educational technology also improves the quality of learning (Fauzi and Arifin, 2023). Many applications and software are specifically designed to help students understand Islamic religious education materials in more interactive and engaging ways. These applications utilize animations and simulations to explain difficult concepts in a more visual and understandable way. This helps students gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Technology in Islamic religious education learning also facilitates collaboration between students and teachers. This promotes collaborative learning, where students learn from each other and develop social skills essential for the workplace. In fact, technology has also brought about changes in student assessment and evaluation (Alfi, Febriasari, and Azka, 2023). Many educational institutions now use online testing software that can automatically assess student performance and provide instant feedback. This allows teachers to monitor student progress more efficiently and design teaching strategies tailored to individual needs (Gkoutis et al., 2025).

Despite the advantages of technology, it is also undeniable that it has negative impacts. For example, the widespread use of gadgets among students can impact student learning. This can negatively impact student learning. Students prioritize their gadgets over their studies. They often neglect their religious obligations as Muslims due to their preoccupation with their devices. This situation requires special attention, especially from parents. Supervision of technology use must be as strict as possible to prevent negative impacts on children. Therefore, discretion in the use of technology is essential, especially for students, so that technology can help the learning process run effectively and efficiently (Assyifa, Fitriyah, and Munawir, 2024).

The positive impact of social media in Islamic Religious Education (IS) learning can turn into a negative one if teachers neglect to equip and guide students with social media ethics. The addictive effect of the internet, with its algorithms, is that search homepages adapt to what is frequently searched for, especially on social media. The algorithm for search suggestions is a system that was created over a long period of time. Changing search suggestions and homepages on social media if they are filled with harmful content requires time to correct (Ardita et al., 2021).

Another negative impact is that technology and its algorithms are prone to presenting false information or hoaxes. False information in education is highly influential because students, especially Gen Z, perceive the information as sufficient to base their arguments without validating its truth. This has the long-term impact of making everyone who uses technology in the classroom fearful of receiving inaccurate information. When students perceive that information can stand alone as an argument, they are less likely to bother verifying its accuracy (Ardita et al., 2021).

2. Building Harmony between Traditional Authorities and Technological Algorithms: Challenges and Solutions

While technological advancements in the digital age offer many positive (as well as negative) impacts, it's important to remember that technology and its algorithms are not a substitute for teachers or religious leaders as traditional authorities. Teachers still play a crucial role in providing guidance, motivation, and supervision to students. Technology should be used as a tool to enhance the learning experience and quality, not replace it (Shamsudinova, 2025).

The use of digital technology as a learning medium for Islamic Religious Education presents a unique challenge for traditional authorities, specifically teachers and religious scholars who currently teach Islamic religious education in schools and Islamic boarding schools. The presence of digital technology enables anyone to speak about Islam. Many public figures, influencers, and even celebrities have suddenly become religious references simply because they are popular on social media. While some of them have good intentions, many also convey religious teachings haphazardly, without a clear scientific basis, methodology, or references (Rakuasa et.al., 2024). This phenomenon has created disorientation in religious authority, where the validity of a religious teaching is determined more by the number of followers and likes. At the same time, it has also encouraged the emergence of new authoritative figures who do not necessarily originate from the formal Islamic education tradition, but are driven by the logic of the media market and virality strategies.

To anticipate this shift in authority, traditional authorities need to adapt and build harmony with technology by implementing digital-based Islamic education learning strategies and enriching Islamic education materials. When implementing digital-based learning, educators first open the lesson with prayer, then conduct an apperception and provide stimulus and motivation to students so that they feel

more prepared to receive the lesson. Educators manage to provide input or brief insights into the material to be covered on that day by delivering materials through online WhatsApp groups, Google Meet, Zoom, or by sending materials via YouTube video links (Wijaya and Ariadi, 2021). Educators ask students to open their Android phones or laptops to download prepared teaching materials, either through WhatsApp groups, Google Classroom, or YouTube video links prepared by the educator, or encourage students to search for the materials themselves through the internet with teacher guidance. Therefore, Islamic education teachers should prepare Islamic education learning materials and include them properly through e-learning media. The included materials and content can be in the form of text, video, or animated images that have been packaged attractively. This is in accordance with the theory that teaching materials that educators need to prepare can be in the form of Multimedia-Based Content, namely, interactive multimedia that can be accessed with the help of an Android phone or computer, or it can also be teaching materials as Text-Based Content, namely media in the form of text, electronic textbooks such as PDFs, or textbooks. However, it is significant to note that this adaptation of digital-based Islamic religious education is not a replacement for traditional learning, but rather as a learning tool (Syahrijar et al., 2023).

Digitalization in education requires that academics and traditional authorities engage in global competition. It is crucial for teachers, preachers, and religious scholars to adapt to the realities and demands of education in this digital era, including in Islamic religious education. Advances in digital technology have opened up opportunities for providing an edutainment approach, combining education and entertainment, enabling students to experience the Islamic religious education process more naturally. Through simple visualizations and light language, Islamic religious education materials become easier to understand and accept without losing their substance (Samala et.al., 2024). For example, a meme featuring a hadith about honesty in the format of a daily cartoon conversation can be more impactful than a textual explanation on a blackboard. This aligns with the theory of connectivism in digital learning, which emphasizes the importance of connecting learning experiences with the context of students' actual lives (Siemens, 2015). In this regard, traditional authorities are challenged to collaborate with Muslim content creators. Digital content creators with an Islamic understanding and graphic design skills can help produce audio-visual learning media in Islamic religious education that are not only aesthetically appealing but also theologically sound. This kind of collaboration can foster a healthy digital ecosystem, where Islamic religious

education is no longer perceived as boring or rigid, but instead becomes part of a digital lifestyle enjoyed by students. In many cases, in this digital era, students are more exposed to religious values from social media accounts such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, or TikTok than from school textbooks (Luthfi, 2024). Yet, religious narratives on social media often suffer from distortions of meaning, either due to simplification or commercial interests, which can lead to slander and polarization among the community.

The low level of digital and religious literacy among Indonesians presents a unique challenge for Islamic religious education teachers. This creates a vacuum that is exploited by deviant content. Digital literacy is not only about the technical ability to use devices and applications, but also the ability to filter information that is credible, objective, and scientifically grounded. Many people, especially teenagers and young adults, seek religious knowledge online without knowing who delivers the message or their academic background. They often misunderstand Islamic teachings by relying on short video clips or quotes without context. This phenomenon is exacerbated by an instant culture that favors short, emotional, and passionate information without in-depth reflection. As a result, many Generation Z members are drawn into a narrow, exclusive, and radical understanding of Islam, believing it represents "pure Islam" (Ramadhan and Dzaikra, 2024). This is where promoting social media ethics and religious literacy becomes crucial.

The ethical challenges emerging in digital technology-based Islamic religious education must be addressed by strengthening digital religious literacy, both for teachers and religious scholars, as well as for Generation Z and students. Teachers and religious scholars need to understand media ethics, maintain the authenticity of Islamic teachings, and avert the manipulation of religious symbols for the sake of popularity. Meanwhile, Generation Z and students need to be equipped with critical skills in selecting credible religious sources. They are taught to express their opinions wisely online, cultivate a culture of clarification or cross-checking before disseminating Islamic information on social media, and address differing views without resorting to insults. This kind of education is crucial for developing a Generation Z that not only understands religious teaching textually but also is able to express it in a way that aligns with the Islamic principle of spreading love for the universe (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*), amidst a digital world. In an academic context, digital religious literacy is a strategic concept for balancing freedom of expression with moral responsibility (Nurhamidin et al., 2025).

The digital era does not necessarily mean the demise of traditional Islamic religious education in classrooms or lectures. Traditional learning provides aspects that cannot be replaced by modern digitalization, such as the formation of noble character. Traditional learning and its motto emphasize not only knowledge as the object of study but also morality and the moral messages conveyed by traditional learning, which cannot be achieved through digital learning or e-learning. Through a system of perpetual learning, traditional authorities can maintain their identity. It is because, according to Glueckauf et al. (2018), the digital era has proven incapable of eroding or replacing traditional learning.

By establishing a good harmony between traditional authorities and technological algorithms, Islamic religious education in the digital era aims not only to educate students with noble character as an investment in human character but also to enhance intelligence and competitive achievement.

C. Conclusion

In the digital age, technology, with its algorithms, is susceptible to presenting false information or hoaxes. This has long-term consequences, making everyone who uses technology fearful of receiving inaccurate information. To build harmony between traditional authorities and technological algorithms, traditional authorities must adapt by taking steps to incorporate Islamic Religious Education into their teachings and enrich Islamic Religious Education materials digitally. Harmonizing traditional authorities and technological algorithms also necessitates strengthening digital and religious literacy. Digital literacy here encompasses not only the technical ability to use devices and applications, but also the ability to filter credible, objective, and scientifically grounded information. This adaptation of digital-based Islamic religious education is not a replacement for traditional learning, but rather a learning tool. The edutainment approach combines education and entertainment, enabling students to experience the process of learning Islamic religious education more naturally. Through simple visualizations and straightforward language, Islamic religious education material can make it easier to understand and accept without losing its substance. In this regard, traditional authorities are challenged to collaborate with Muslim content creators to create audio-visual learning media for Islamic religious education that is not only aesthetically appealing but also theologically sound. Such collaboration can foster a healthy digital ecosystem, where Islamic religious education is no longer perceived as boring or rigid, but instead becomes part of a digital lifestyle enjoyed by students.

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